

Beata Działowicz
School of Directing
Krzysztof Kieślowski Faculty of Radio and Television
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Diplomas and degrees

1993 – graduated from the University of Silesia in Katowice with the Master Degree in Polish studies at the Faculty of Polish Philology, the master's thesis title: 'The Sublime - the Study of the Theme in Romantic and Modern Literature' (the thesis supervisor dr hab. Aleksander Nawarecki, the thesis reviewer: prof. dr hab. Ireneusz Opacki; the thesis was awarded a first-class degree).

2012 – the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in directing at the Faculty of Radio and Television of the University of Silesia; the doctoral dissertation title: 'Such a Profession Does Not Exist, a Word about the Personality and Style of a Film Editor Katarzyna Maciejko-Kowalczyk' (the dissertation supervisor prof. dr hab. Andrzej Fidyk, the dissertation reviewers: prof. dr hab. Jerzy Łukaszewicz, dr hab. Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz).

Employment in Academic Units

1.10.2014 – until now

Institution: The University of Silesia in Katowice, Krzysztof Kieślowski Faculty of Radio and Television

Position: teaching and research lecturer

Full-time employment

1.10.2009 – 30.06. 2012

Institution: The University of Silesia in Katowice, Krzysztof Kieślowski Faculty of Radio and Television

Position: teaching and research assistant

Contract agreement

1.10.2012 – 30.06.2018

Institution: Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Vocal-Instrumental Department

Position: teaching and research lecturer
Part-time employment

Non-academic places of employment:

2.01.2000 – 30.10.2014

Institution: Stanisław Wyspiański Silesian Theatre

Position: specialist in the cinema

Full-time employment

Self-report
Justa on the Edge

Works produced after gaining a doctoral degree

After gaining a doctoral degree I produced a documentary entitled 'Twarze Łopusznej' ('The Faces of Łopuszna') as well as a television play entitled 'Koncert życzeń' ('the Concert of Requests') and a feature film 'Odnajdę cię' ('On the Run'), for which I also wrote the screenplay.

'Twarze Łopusznej' is a documentary film, the idea for which originated in the Father Professor Józef Tischner House Museum, more specifically Ms. Józefa Kuchta, who came up with the idea to film Łopuszna's octogenarians and nonagenarians. Initially, it was supposed to be a notation rather than a separate work. However, together with Łukasz Tischner (the author of the screenplay) we decided to persuade the originators to make a documentary film, in which the Father Professor Józef Tischner would serve as a pretext to meet his friends from Łopuszna and ask the simplest - and yet the most important - of questions: what is the purpose of life. The filming began in 2005 (so, technically, before I gained my PhD. The whole process, however, took a long time and the project was only completed after 'Latawce' ('Kites'), which was part of the conferment procedure for my doctoral degree). We wanted to make a documentary about memory, but also about fears and anxieties, especially fear of death, about friendship and faith. We had an opportunity to meet and film a number of unique people. Although several of Łopuszna's outstanding inhabitants well deserved documentary films of their own, I made a decision to create a mosaic of various figures and in this way try to preserve the memory of the whole microcosm. None of the people seen in the film is alive any longer. They all perceived the world from an unconventional perspective. Łopuszna is the place which Professor Józef Tischner came from and where he regularly returned to visit his friends. His voice can be heard off-screen and this, I believe, imparts an absolutely unique significance to the film. By courtesy of Dorota Zańko and Jarosław Gowin, who

conducted a long interview with Tischner shortly before his death, I had an opportunity to listen to the recordings of the Professor's voice after the larynx operation he had undergone. Although speaking caused him a great deal of difficulty, his thoughts were expressed in a meticulous and simply beautiful manner. Making the selection of Tischner's words was a metaphysical experience. Today I see that the documentary is slightly too long (it lasts about 40 minutes) and for purely cinematic reasons it could use some editing, but it was not meant for broad audiences (despite the fact that it had its premiere at the Kraków Film Festival), but as a testimony to Łopuszna and its inhabitants, so for the sake of more complete record I left the longer version. Surely, a director is not expected to say something like that. A documentary film-maker, however, can afford to do that.

After many years of making documentaries (I have always avoided using the place 'directing' documentaries, even though in many cases it is quite justified), I decided to try my hand at fiction. I started safely from a television theatre. I have always been fond of theatre and I already had some experience in stage productions, so such a choice seemed the most logical direction for further development.

While editing documentaries, more often than not, I cut the scenes with a strong emotional charge. It was only once that I left tears. Once an argument. Making each of the documentaries I kept asking myself whether the person in it, several years later when their life would be different and the perspective of self-reflection would change its meaning, would be able to look at themselves seen through my eyes all those years before. I did not want my films to be a source of suffering. It happened quite often that a director in me was beaten by an amateur therapist and good scenes landed in a rubbish bin. And I am still not sure whether by any chance I should not have done it more often. Perhaps in several more cases I should have hurt my films rather than people in them. It was the main reason why fiction appealed to me - an absolute lack of responsibility for the well-being of characters entrusted to my care. I could kill them, provoke arguments, lead them into temptation and still look at my own face in the mirror with no remorse

whatsoever. This is the kind of relief that only a document film-maker who has switched to fiction can understand.

In works of fiction my main interests turned towards female characters who, despite their strong personalities, intelligence and well-defined goals, do not seem to cope with the relationships with those closest to them, or perhaps sacrifice those relationships for fulfilling their other needs.

'Koncert życzeń' takes place in a family home. Three sisters (Ala – Katarzyna Herman, Viola – Ewa Kaim and Ewa – Ewa Gorzelak) come back home for Ala's and Ewa's daughter's First Communion. The women's father (the role played by the unforgettable Władysław Kowalski) is another important character. I made sure that each of the women derives joy and satisfaction from a completely different role in life.

Viola is a journalist and has no children. Apparently, she enjoys her life the most and the fact that she is single and there are no children toddling around her does not seem to trouble her at all. Viola does not find a close family essential in life. She feels happier without binding ties. She does not believe in God either. Rationality and freedom determine her choices. Life according to her own convictions and professional work are enough for Viola to be content.

Ewa is the youngest, a rebellious girl. She had a child too early and with a wrong guy, but she copes quite well, staying young and irresponsible, although now keeping it within safe boundaries. Raising the child is a big challenge for her. Trying not to lose her own style and convictions, she still brings up her daughter in a very traditional way - just like her parents she tries to turn the girl into a rebellious copy of herself, paying no attention to what the girl herself wants. What is most important to her is not to follow conventional patterns. And if she does, she does not seem to notice (unless her obliging sisters will not let her ignore her inconsistent behaviour).

Ala, the oldest one, has the greatest difficulty finding the meaning of life. After their mother's death, she stayed in the family home with their father and her daughter. She got divorced after only three months of marriage, but it was still extremely important

to her that her child had a 'legitimate' father. Her existence is stretched between her responsibilities as a daughter and as a mother. She has no life of her own outside home. Her only chance for a change is going to a camp as a supervisor, but for her to fulfil her dream one of the sisters would have to take care of the sick father.

This is the starting point for my characters. Ala has the longest way to go and when her dreams of the longed-for job are thwarted and her father's diabetes-induced collapse prevents her from attending the long-awaited First Communion of her daughter she finally seems to be resigned to her fate. She manages to create an illusion so that her father will never feel like a burden. She makes her peace with her life only when she stops trying to control everything.

Other characters succeed in overcoming their shortcomings as well. Ewa gives up her attempts to pressure her daughter to accept her principles. Viola enters the church, although God did not help her when she expected him to.

None of these women have a husband or a partner. Sometimes there has never been one, sometimes they left or were chased away. Their elderly father is the only man in their lives. In spite of the fact that he is not involved in their life dilemmas and tries to live his own life, and his choices have not always been sound, they still count on his help in crisis situations and listen to his advice. The women are bending over the pastry board with pierogis and seemingly only trying to take control over the culinary chaos, but at the same time they are untangling the relationships between one another and the world.

I am very happy with various decisions made during the production of 'Koncert życzeń'. With the camera operator Jacek Petrycki we chose to employ documentary-like long shots (the longest of which lasts approximately 8 minutes), which resulted in unique dramatic tension of the scenes. The actors tended to forget about the camera or the crew. They were very natural, did not play for the camera lens or the light, rather it was our job to capture what was significant in their world. After the production was shown at the Sopot 'Two Theatres' Festival, the question we heard the most frequently was whether all the dialogues were improvised and the audience refused to believe that there was not one

impromptu line, but all of them were delivered exactly as they had been written. I think that we managed to achieve a sense of unaffectedness thanks to the actors' talent and the accommodating camera work. We never put the actors in specific positions. Jacek Petrycki managed to illuminate the whole space in such a way that we could afford this rare luxury. The stage design helped a great deal too. Marcel Sławiński (who, incidentally, made his debut as a stage designer in my theatre production) and Katarzyna Sobańska created the whole world in an uninhabited building. It goes without saying that the meagre budget of the Television Theatre made it necessary to use private resources. My family home (as well as a few others) were stripped of all kinds of used objects, photographs, preserves and keepsakes, which allowed us to create the space enabling the actors to immerse themselves in the lives of their characters. This whole world worked. In the drawers real cutlery collided with bottle caps collected 'just in case'. Lottery tickets were authentic, pictures unique, colanders cracked and rusty. The fact that we filmed in Katowice while the actors were from Warszawa or Kraków was also important. They came for a week, they did not have to rush home or to do other things. Thanks to this and the fact that all the production took place in one building we could film the play in a chronological order. This kind of luxury hardly ever happens and it worked brilliantly. I came to appreciate those luxurious conditions again several years later while filming my first feature film.

'Koncert życzeń' met with favourable critical reception, Katarzyna Herman and Ewa Kaim were given awards for their roles at the Sopot 'Two Theatres' Festival. Nevertheless, for my habilitation I have decided to choose a work which is more flawed, a film 'Odnajdę cię' ('On the Run').

The title of the artistic achievement

'Odnajdę cię' ('On the Run') – feature film 83 min., colour (2018) – direction, screenplay.

The outline of the artistic goal of the above-mentioned work and the results achieved

'On the Run' (working title 'Justa') is my first work which is strictly fiction. It seems like a complete about-turn as my field of work involved documentaries and theatre productions. But is it really?

The film was meant to be a combination of drama and crime genres. And it was the drama aspect that was my departure point. I was looking for the environment for the main character, who I wanted to put to the moral test. The film was meant to be about maternal commitments, which prevail over everything else. About how easy it is to make wrong decisions if one's child's safety, or perhaps even life, is at stake. About a woman who finds herself in a situation in which she will have to abandon her moral values, put a man's life at risk, break the law and go against her own principles and, most of all, transcend her limitations. And also about that, as she herself says in the film, 'you have to be able not to forgive as well.'

My choice was a female police officer, which appealed to me for two reasons. On the one hand, she is required to maintain stricter standards of following the law, and if she does not live up to them, the cost she has to pay is higher than for an ordinary person. On the other, members of the police force have some skills and abilities, not just physical, superior to most people. They are trained to control stress and taught to think clearly under tremendous pressure. They should be able to cope with their own emotions as well as with the emotions of others. All of these are obviously positive qualities of a protagonist - a policewoman. But they also pose a problem if you want a character who does not have to be attractive, but should be convincing (which was extremely important to me). The viewer, who cannot shoot a gun, let alone, keep calm while frantic with fear and rage, will find it hard to relate to such a person.

Still I stuck to my decision to make a policewoman my main character. The 'ordinariness' of the character was what I had to struggle for. I put her in a situation of strong family pressure. Her husband (played by Mirosław Haniszewski) has found a less stressful partner and has a child with her. Meeting her husband for the first time Justa

(Ewa Kaim) learns that her daughter is going to have a baby half-brother or sister, and that her husband wants a divorce to take care of his new family. Justa deals three blows, never missing her target, to express her view on the situation. This is the first instance in the film when my protagonist loses her cool and breaks the law. And the first fracture in her so far unblemished personality. The crack which marks the beginning of her moral decline. I designed my main character in such a manner that, despite her job, the audience could relate to her. Justa has no superpowers at her disposal, she is a perfectly ordinary, averagely bright, adequately fit police officer.

The reception of the character constructed in this way varied. I suppose that a large number of viewers were disappointed that she does not resemble an American 'wonder woman', even more so, since the distributor, Kino Świat, billed the film as an action movie, which, in my opinion, was completely inaccurate and used solely for marketing purposes. The critics, on the other hand, generally saw the ordinariness of the protagonist and her psychological make-up as the main strength of the film.

Michał Zacharzewski, for instance, writes that *'The kidnapping happens relatively early in the film and from this point we watch the protagonist attempting to get her child back. And this is the strength of 'On the Run'. This is not an American movie. This is not a movie about a supermam ready to wage war on all the evil of this world and crushes a villain in a most spectacular way. 'Bacia' makes demands and Justa has to play ball. She has to break the law, she gets into a fight with her mates from the station. The child is what is the most important to her and she will do everything and anything to rescue her (which is also proved by the dysfunctional relationship she has with her husband). The problem is that her nasty character leaves her to fight alone.'*¹

Bartosz Żurawiecki: *'(...) the film is carried by the energy of Ewa Kaim, who plays the role of Justa. The actress is on screen practically all the time and her spirit and determination never leave her. Although it is fight for her daughter that pushes her to the edge, she is far from the stereotype of an overanxious mummy. She is more like a Hispanic mother-lioness who will tear the throat of anybody who comes too close to her cubs or tries to dominate her. In one scene she knocks out, without warning, her unfaithful husband, who has started to lie and scheme. The belligerence which drives Kaim's performance is the reason why we cannot quite condemn Justa, even when she*

1 <https://zdalaodpolityki.pl/2018/08/19/odnajde-cie/>

has obviously gone too far, like for example when she finishes off one of the villains with a crowbar. The scenes between Justa and her superior also come out well. Daro (Michał Żurawski) is a little bit of a mate, a little bit of a boss, a little bit of a lover (but, as it is usually the case in Polish cinema, there is no time for sex - duty calls). They do not pussyfoot around, the sparks of sexual fascination and professional rivalry fly between them. The issue of sexism in the police force is never mentioned, perhaps deliberately sidestepped or maybe we should consider it a sign that equality is closer than we think. On the other hand, in the presence of Justa I would never dare to make a joke which could be regarded as even a little sexist²

Whereas Łukasz Maciejewski, writes about the actress rather than the character:

'(...) above all, however, she played the main role in Beata Dżianowicz's first feature film 'On the Run'. Even those who slammed the film itself had to admit that Ewa Kaim's performance is amazing. Justa, a policewoman with the troubled past, in Kaim's interpretation, is tired and frustrated, but at the same time she struggles fiercely for the good of her child. This is a Hollywood type: a woman on her own against everybody. In the US Jodie Foster used to play roles like that, now they are Jessica Chastain's domain. And Ewa Kaim is no worse than either of them. The viewer believes in Justa's every gesture, in every decision she takes, often on the edge of law. Unlike the characters in Patryk Vega's films, to give just example, Justa in 'On the Run' is a complicated, ambiguous character full of secrets. A mystery called Ewa Kaim.'³

I began the work on the screenplay from the protagonist's biography. For several months I focused on her life, filled with events, anecdotes, family's accounts - from her birth to the moment when Justa goes to the police academy. There is no reference to these events in the film. It is just a description of situations that determined her psychological make-up. I have been asked if the character is based on a real person. No, she is not. And although I am a compulsive reader of non-fiction, and I like to observe people and collect witty dialogues, not excluding those from the police world, Justa is purely fictional. Nevertheless, some scenes (like, for example, the idea of a woman asking politely to get beaten in order to doctor medical records) are taken from my neighbours' life.

² http://kino.org.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3042&Itemid=1

³ <http://www.e-teatr.pl/pl/artykuly/269561,druk.html>

The next stage was writing a screenplay. At that point I already knew very well who I was dealing with. I put a great deal of emphasis on the psychological aspect of the story. On constructing the mechanisms of small concessions on moral issues, which, step by step, will change even such a person like Justa, who does not spend a lot of time ruminating. A small compromise with her conscience at the beginning finally leads to her killing a man. The purpose of the crime aspect was to further the character's development and, obviously, to keep the story going. Forgiveness versus responsibility. The consequences of coerced choices. The relationship between a mother and a child, which makes everything else irrelevant. These were the themes of the greatest interest to me.

I wrote the screenplay with Ewa Kaim, whom I had met during the filming of 'Koncert życzeń', in mind. I not only knew her capabilities as an actor, but we had got to know each other personally as well. I was well aware of how radically different Justa is from her. Kaim is a considerate, well-organized, well-balanced, elegant, and, most of all, wise woman. The only sport she has ever done is dance. Whereas Justa acts fast, rarely stops to think, never hesitates, her conscience does not bother her in 'small' matters (like, for instance, beating up her husband), and is anything but thoughtful. I very much wanted her to be self-reliant, without feeling the need to ingratiate herself with the world. She does not find it essential to be liked or widely approved of. Ruthless, violent, filthy but powerless when it comes to her adolescent daughter. I believe that the main reason why the outstanding actress of the Stary Theatre did not decline my request to play a role of such a deeply disturbed person was this dissimilarity. After Kaim read the character's biography and a rough draft of the screenplay, she joined a boxing class. It was more than a year before we submitted the screenplay for the Polish Film Institute's approval. And even though the chances for the production were purely hypothetical, Kaim started working on the role. Her appearance had changed, she had lost her dainty figure and ballet dancer gait. Training in boxing, a high intensity workout and sport diet enabled her to resemble Justa physically. For the first time in her life she had biceps and visible musculature. When the production was green-lighted, the actress was already fully prepared for the role.

All the decisions I made as a director took Justa into consideration and their main purpose was to build her personality. And it applies to the whole range of decisions from artistic to practical ones. For example:

The film was supposed to tell a story taking place during a hot summer month. We obtained the Polish Film Institute's funding in February, so the producer, Włodzimierz Niderhaus, suggested that we start filming earlier. We had to hasten the preparations, which made the whole process more difficult. There were nearly 50 indoor and outdoor locations in 'On the Run' screenplay. I had already made preliminary arrangements with main cast, but I still needed to find about twenty actors. We had no crew whatsoever, and so on. Two months was precious little time for all the preproduction preparations. However, although the solution was risky I finally agreed because of Justa. I came to the conclusion that the greys of early spring would suit the character much better than the summer riot of colour. And I stand by my decision.

Talking to the set designer, Agata Adamus, I kept insisting that the style of this fictional world should be documentary-like and that the protagonist's personality should determine its aesthetic character. I wanted chipped mugs handles, walls faded and tatty, documents stained with coffee. I emphasized the same while choosing the costumes with Agnieszka Sobiecka. I rejected anything soft, warm, conventionally feminine - Justa would find no use for clothes like that. We made sure that every bit of furniture, shirt or knick-knack was in the character's style. In the living room there was dry laundry waiting ages to be folded, in the kitchen old peelings, on the balcony a jar full of cigarette butts. This place belonged to a real, not imaginary, woman.

Looking for a composer I was not concerned with what kind of music would be the most appropriate for a drama with pretensions to a crime, but what would suit the main character. I knew Mariusz Goli by sight and I heard him playing. He is not a professional musician but a busker - he earns playing the guitar in the street. For years he had had his pitch in the underpass under my building, so I had a pretty good idea about his skill. Despite the fact that for ten years I had been working for the Academy of Music

in Katowice, famous for its composition department, I chose Goli, who cannot even read music. Every time I walked past him, I heard in the sound of his guitar the same anxiety as that gnawing at Justa, the same energy driving them both. Goli was surprised by the offer. He had been hesitating for many months, even when he had written over half of the score, he still was not certain whether he should do it or not. He is a kind of person who gives his talent away for free (or a coin tossed into his guitar case), so it was not easy for him to decide to sign a multi-page contract and hand over the rights to his work. I am very glad that he finally agreed. I think that his music is one of the strengths of the film.

I only had a chance for a few rehearsals before shooting, and again I focused on the scenes which shape the protagonist's relationships. I decided to do so, even though an important role was played by a child actress, who I should give some attention to (in fact beforehand I had worked with Zosia Stelmach 'just in case', so I trusted that she would manage without further preparations). During the rehearsals Justa met all the men in her life. We arranged those complicated relationships, setting the limits for the male characters beyond which they could expect Justa's violent reaction. Daro (Michał Żurawski) was given most space for himself. His character was the least significant from the point of view of the plot, but extremely important in the sphere of private and professional relationships. The comparison between the screenplay and the completed movie reveals that Żurawski 'stretched' his role (with my and the editor's consent), and effectively became the male lead, overshadowing Bacia (Dariusz Chojnacki). Certainly I and the editor Rafał Listopad could easily bring Żurawski to heel, but we came to the conclusion that what happened between Justa and Daro on set was worth preserving. That this kind of hope for a relationship, which cannot be, but is an unfulfilled, alternative fate, does good this tough woman. (Incidentally, this is one of the greatest pleasures I experienced as a director while working on this film: something happened beyond the plan written in the screenplay and designed by me. Fictional world of a feature film can also give you a surprise.)

Incidentally, I heard a very curious thing from my editor. 'On the Run' was not the first film with Michał Żurawski which he edited. And Listopad announced that

'Żurawski had learned to work with him.' It is hard to believe that an actor building their role takes into consideration the style of an editor, with whom he will share the responsibility for their character. The fact that they need to meet director's expectations is inspiring (or discouraging) enough. An actor and an editor normally never even meet. However, this time Żurawski was exceptionally accommodating. For example, according to the editor, for the first time he paid particular attention to the finishing parts of the scenes, so that we could easily choose how to end each situation focusing either on him or on Justa. His performance was also considerably more subtle than usual. Żurawski likes to raise his voice, so I persuaded him that in my film he would do it only once. He would have to find different sources of power for his character. So he did. And later Łukasz Maciejewski wrote that *'it might well be the best of this actor's roles so far'*⁴, which made me enormously happy, as, apparently, we were right to expand this character.

This is quite fascinating how well actors such as Żurawski or Mirosław Haniszewski, Piotr Stramowski and Dariusz Chojnacki - all of them with considerable experience in the main or leading roles - can find themselves in the roles supporting a female protagonist. Each of them told me at one point, usually with astonishment, that they had to find new keys to defend their characters, that in a relationship with a strong woman they are required to devise their own energy, different than in male duels. The reason might be that I and Ewa Kaim were extremely careful to prevent anybody (apart from Bacia – Chojnacki) from pushing her into a corner. But we did not want her to come across as a butch. She was to be her own woman having the right to tears as well as to a crowbar.

If I were to define in one word what is important for me in Justa character, I would say that it is her **strength**. Everything that shapes this character – her courage, uncompromising nature, aversion to passivity, the desire to experience the world on her

4 <https://kultura.onet.pl/film/recenzje/odnajde-cie-szczelina-miedzy-swiatami-recenzja/fjs0hle>

own terms - stems from this strength. Ewa Kaim knew where Justa's strength comes from because she was the only one who had read the biography of her character. She had no doubts whatsoever why she makes these particular choices. The viewer naturally does not know the background of the character, but - judging from the audience's response - they believe in her. Even the reviewers who were otherwise critical towards the film, pointed out that the protagonist's personality is its asset.

The theme of strength in a flawed person has been fascinating me since I started directing. This is what intrigues me most in people - where does power come from if one is a blind prisoner locked with other frustrated cripples? Or a woman starving to death sustained only by adherence to absurd principles? Or a shy boy who can kick the ball around and not much more? Where do they all find strength to learn Braille, break the pattern, leave for California, or - like Ochojska - pull together her broken body to lead a convoy to Sarajevo, or dare to laugh again after seeing so many executions on the stadium like our students in Kabul? In fact nearly every film which I have made revolves around the subject of the strength of the people who are weak, marked with some physical or psychological flaw. I had faith in the people taking part in my documentaries and I kept my fingers crossed, and they actually managed to cope with all the adversities and trials. So the protagonist of my feature film had to be victorious as well. Even in a situation when she had no choice, she tried to play her own game. She lost a lot but she preserved what was the most valuable to her. With full awareness she suffered the consequences of her choices. A bitter victory, a victory still.

The reception of 'On the Run' was truly bewildering, with reviews ranging from very favourable to extremely critical, which were typically accompanied with a faint praise: 'there is something in this film anyhow.' It did not qualify for the Gdynia Film Festival, but its world premiere took place at the A-class Montreal World Film Festival (in the First Films World Competition it was among 19 out of 2000 pictures submitted). It did reasonably well in the cinemas (50 thousand viewers despite the risky decision to screen it in the middle of the hot holiday season), which might mean that it met some

demand or perhaps that the distributor's strategy (which I strongly oppose) proved effective.

The film was meant to be a hybrid of different genres with the emphasis on the drama, which seems to be the origin of all the problems and challenges 'On the Run' has faced. After all, drama and crime films demand different type of storytelling, a different cinematic language. In the history of the cinema quite a lot of examples of a successful blend of this kind can be found, like for instance, Luc Besson's 'Nikita' or Coen brothers' 'Fargo'. Typically, in such cases directors focus on the more attractive genre and tell the drama story with the language of an action movie. I chose the opposite direction, which some critics see as a fatal mistake (Walkiewicz⁵), but others (Maciejewski⁶, Hollender⁷) find the idea refreshing and pertinent. Credibility is a departure point for each of my works. That is why in my films there are so many non-professional actors (who are not generally invited to take part in action movies). There are about thirty of them in 'On the Run'. Their presence is the most important in the scene when school friends meet and in the prison sequence. In the latter, apart from Ewa Kaim, there are only two professional actresses. In my opinion, however, others played their small parts with great success and built a stimulating and convincing background for the main character.

Stunt scenes were the ones most affected by the decision that set design and the manner of filming would be realistic. The audience is accustomed to spectacle and does not necessarily care about credibility. Breakneck pace of blows dealt by nobody knows who and where they actually hit is regarded as natural in scenes of this kind. We were consistent in filming fights, usually employing long shots. We made sure that these sequences were no different than the rest of the film so as to make it stylistically

5 <https://www.filmweb.pl/review/Walka+z+czasem-21616>

6 <https://kultura.onet.pl/film/recenzje/odnajde-cie-szczelina-miedzy-swiatami-recenzja/fjs0hle>

7 https://www.rp.pl/Film/180809947-Odnajde-cie-Polski-kryminal-coraz-ciekawszy.html?fbclid=IwAR152RFa8_3U_MQuOri2KL_2oRLRTuJNVMyUWI801-6QJiU65QEu9XNxRo8

consistent without the division between drama and action. This decision must have disappointed part of the audience and it was a considerable problem for the distributor (Kino Świat), which billed the film as an action thriller, 'the Polish reply to "Taken" with Liam Neeson'. The advertising poster read 'She has 24 hours to rescue her daughter', which managed to at the same time reveal the midpoint and mislead the audience as there is no one-day pressure of time in the film. Neither the distributor nor I were able to deceive the viewers. Judging by comments on Filmweb and other websites, they were perfectly aware that they were being manipulated and under the thin veneer of a 'thriller' they were being served a drama.

Looking at my own work objectively, I have no doubt that the drama scenes, which build psychological tension, come out the best. Or at least exactly the way I wanted and I like. Actors play in 'zero style', in a convincing and moving manner. I keep asking myself whether I was right to make Justa a police officer. Whether it would not be better for the film if she worked in any other field which guarantees physical fitness. Then I would have been able to avoid stunt scenes and focus on what is closer to my heart. I have doubts. However, I have picked a policewoman. There is no other job that makes a person more accustomed to inflicting pain. A policewoman-mother lives two mutually exclusive lives; she should provide a child's safety and at the same time she cannot be afraid to risk her own life - a conflict which is very appealing to a film-maker.

I started directing making documentaries. When I was a student, the Faculty of Radio and Television suffered a decline. When now I hear students complaining that there are too few workshops and that they do not make enough short films (and they make several every year), I want to react like a grandma: 'in my day...!'. Because in my day we draw positions of a hypothetical camera on the blackboard and we said what we would tell actors if we had any. It was a great time when excellent teachers (Edward Żebrowski, Stanisław Janicki, Andrzej Jurga, Zygmunt Duś, Joanna Krauze and very young at the time Michał Rosa and Maciej Pieprzyca) were trying to help us develop theoretical skills of making and understanding the cinema. During three years of study I made only one short film.

It was a documentary 'Cela z widokiem' ('A Cell with a View'). I made it with Betacam and I had a week to film. My first documentary experience was an enormous challenge. It was set in Bydgoszcz, in the prison where all blind and visually impaired prisoners were held. The film was to tell the story of Alina Korolewska, a blind French teacher preparing the prisoners for the matura exam, who met her husband in the prison. It was a love story with a twist because, although the marriage with a blind murderer was happy and they had a healthy and bright daughter, it fell apart because of alcohol. The documentation, the screenplay and the strategy of the film ended up in the rubbish bin the moment we arrived in Bydgoszcz because the husband had disappeared without trace. We entered the prison with an ad hoc plan. We organized a one-week crash braille course taught by Alina. After a week the prisoners knew all the letters and numbers they needed to play cards with decks designed for the blind. During this short period of time a lot was going on in their minds and in their relationships with one another. The film, whose screenplay only took shape on the editing table, turned out optimistic, surprising for the audience. It was about hope which can be preserved even in the most adverse circumstances. At Kraków Film Festival (then called The International Short Films Festival) 'A Cell with a View' was awarded the TVP prize by Andrzej Fidyk and it meant a promise to finance another production. Afterwards the film was invited to several

festivals, unfortunately with an impossible condition of converting it into 35 mm, and the University, let alone I, could not afford such an extravagance. One or two years later most festivals allowed digitally-made films to be submitted.

'Marzenia i śmierć' ('Dreams and Death') was financed by the Kraków prize. This is the film about girls who got caught in the trap of anorexia, but were trying to break free, fighting with the enemy in their heads. After the film was shown I was flooded with letters from anorectic girls' parents from all over the country. It was a unique satisfaction, not just of a director. This film was also the greatest moral challenge I have ever faced as a director. Some of the girls died before the film was completed and I decided to cut the scenes with them to avoid causing pain to the families. My inner censor checked every scene. I feared the moment when 'Dreams and Death' would be shown on television, especially as it was in the series 'Czas na dokument' ('The Time for Documentary'), which was hugely popular at the time. The rate of suicides among anorexics is higher than among the people with other mental disorders. Although I did my best to prepare the girls for their stories being made public (their faces and emotions really, not just experiences) and I consulted with psychiatrists specializing in anorexia, I still could not predict the girls' response to the reception of their stories by the people they know. The reaction was mixed. One of the girls told me that strangers came up to her in the street and asked her 'why are you being so silly?' Fortunately, most of the people were supportive. The film helped one girl in therapy. In two cases it did not change anything. I think it was after six months after the film was shown when I was able to sleep calmly.

'Sztuka dyrygowania' ('The Art of Conducting') was a kind of antidote. It is a story about clarinetists from the Silesian Philharmonic in Katowice, who augmented their salaries as wedding musicians and masters of ceremonies. They were my people from Silesia. Apparently, they were frustrated that they had to divide their time between Mahler and disco polo, but in fact happy that their music brought pleasure to people, both in the concert hall and in the fire station.

Afterwards with the editors of ZNAK magazine (mainly Łukasz Tischner and Jarosław Gowin) I made two series of programmes on cultural subjects entitled 'Znaki' ('Signs') and 'Słowa i znaki' ('Words and Signs') for the state television. They were absolutely apolitical half-an-hour programmes consisting of fragments of edited interviews with intellectuals, artists, sometimes sportspeople, which complemented one another and every time linked by a common theme. The episode 'O cudach' ('About Miracles') qualified as a documentary for Kraków Film Festival and Documentary Festival 'Nurt' in Kielce, where it was awarded the favourite prize of young directors - a promise to finance another film.

It was 'Deyna', a story about Kazimierz Deyna, which I made together with Jarosław Stypa. We chose a legendary figure on purpose in order to make a film to lift people's spirits but also to do justice to the legend of Warszawa football club Legia, who was booed mercilessly and senselessly by spectators on the Silesian Stadium during the match with Portugal in 1978. After telling the stories of people whose all life had been a struggle with the burden of existence, with their own bodies, with spiritual futility, I felt that I needed to show a person who was successful. Deyna was born in the little town of Starogard and yet became an international success. And although he died tragically, it was in the sunny California and it can be said that his life was completed prematurely. However, the deeper we delved into Deyna's life, the darker the film became and the completed film turned out quite pessimistic. The final words are spoken by one of Kazimierz's sisters, 'If he hadn't played football, he could have been even happier.' But despite its gloomy tone, the film was shown over a hundred times (sic!) by various television stations. We had never expected it to be so popular.

At the same time I was involved in two other big productions concerning Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH): 'The Journey (not quite) Sentimental' documenting ten years of PAH's activities and 'A Lesson of Hope' about a school in Kabul rebuilt by PAH. It was in Afghanistan where the idea of my most important documentary, on which I based my doctoral degree, 'Latawce' ('Kites'), was born. The students from the Kabul arts school, which was being rebuilt at the time, asked me to run a film course (they mainly

wanted to know how to use a film camera). I agreed with a naive hope that some European educational organizations would provide funds for such an interesting project. I was wrong. After many attempts I gave up. In the end, my friend and producer Krzysztof Kopczyński came to the conclusion that it would be easier to obtain funds for a film and organize the course at our own expense. It was what we did.

We ran a six-week course in the basics of documentary art 'Kabul, moje miasto' ('Kabul, My City') and at the same time we making a film with our students' short films as an integral part. The course proved incredibly successful: we started working with people who did not have television sets and hardly ever been to the cinema and finished with the screening of their short films in the Kabul Film Institute, where Siddiq Barmak, fresh after his Cannes Festival success, was in the audience. Two of the then teenagers are still active in Afghan film industry.

'Kites' travelled around the world and was awarded at many festivals, but its main purpose was to show people extremely intimate portrayals of the Afghans, so exotic for most of us. We, thanks to our incredibly talented novice documentary film-makers, were the first to break through the cultural barrier and show the ordinary everyday life from the inside. 'Kites' was not just about the everyday life in Afghanistan, but also about what a documentary is really about.

Teaching experience

Teaching students of directing for almost ten years I have been running a number of original projects, among which I especially value those enabling students to work in a professional theatre. We cooperated with three theatres: Teatr Lalki i Aktora Ateneum (the Silesia Theatre Of Lalka And Actor 'Ateneum') in Katowice, Teatr Dzieci Zagłębia (the Zagłębie Children's Theatre) in Będzin and Teatr Śląski (the Silesian Theatre) in Katowice and its theatre school. At the Silesian Theatre we had a one-off event open to the audience ('Premiera w tydzień') and two productions which became part of the theatres repertoire: 'Zbuntowany autobus, czyli jazda bez trzymanki' in Katowice and

'Zaczarowana karuzela' in Będzin. The principle of these theatre experiments was to bond Silesian arts schools. The students of the Academy of Fine Arts in Katowice (under supervision of Katarzyna Sobańska and Marcel Sławiński) were responsible for stage design, the students of the Academy of Music composed the score. Not only did the productions have an enormous educational value but they were always popular with the audience. Both ran for the whole season, even though they were a group enterprise afflicted by a number of directing compromises. The plays were written by students themselves (my role was to coordinate) and then everybody directed their own part. The work took about a month and a half of everyday rehearsals, like in professional conditions. It gave the students the opportunity to work with professional actors for several weeks - the luxury that film school students can only dream of.

The most important teaching experience for me, however, developed over the years of trial and error, is **documentary workshops**. At the beginning most (luckily not all) students of directing see a documentary as a necessary evil. It is astonishing how little they know about the genre when they start university studies. At first I went to a week-long documentary workshop with the third-year directing and camera operating students. After several days of gathering material we decided on the subject and for a week we observed five pupils from the smallest primary school in the European Union in Łutowiec in the Kraków-Częstochowa Jurassic Upland. The film was edited every day and analysed in the evening. We developed strategies to work with each of the children and in the middle of the week the turn of events made us change the subject of the film completely. The short film finally completed entitled 'Gdybym tylko był pająkiem' ('If I just was a spider') was accepted by Kraków Film Foundation and qualified for several important festivals in Poland and abroad (Kraków Film Festival, Etiuda&Anima and Guangzhou International Documentary Film Festival in China among others). Unfortunately, however, the flaw of the film was that we did not manage to develop a consistent cinematic language. Although we revised the rules every day, each camera operator worked in their own way. Both directors and operators were fully committed to the project, but the latter needed more technical instruction.

So I decided that the next time I would ask my friend, camera operator and a teacher at the Faculty of Radio and Television at the University of Silesia, to take part in the workshop. We went to Beskid Sądecki, to a small town situated high in the mountains and covered with snow to wait for a priest making a traditional round of calls to parishioners: one crew followed the priest while the others observed the preparations in the houses of old housewives. This time Tomasz Woźniczka was supervising the camera operators. It was immediately obvious that the cooperation worked, even though we had eight crews where the difficult art of communication between a director and a camera operator had to be established. Every day after shooting we analysed the material, the students exchanged their experiences and found mistakes, which, surprisingly, usually resulted from the problems between a director and a camera operator rather than communication with the people they filmed.

Then I and Woźniczka decided to completely change the idea of the workshops. Instead of advanced students we take first-year ones and they do not have to complete a film. The purpose of the workshops is now primarily educational and integrational. The students of directing and camera operating together choose a subject. After gathering the material we go to shoot for about a week. In the evening or at night we together analyse the material. but now we also give students 'formal' tasks (like for example, making an observational scene, an inspired scene, a passage with a pre-set emotional tone, a group scene with at least three people, establishing and so on) making sure that these scenes are suitable for the subject. Also halfway through the workshops we break the director-operator pairs. A director stays with the filmed hero, but there is a different person behind the camera. The choice of new pairs is preceded by careful observation of students on set. We try to match people who think about documentaries in a different way but are similar in sensibility. The opposition to this forced change is inevitable, but it nearly always results in a surprising development of films. New director - camera operator pairs is a game changer - we have material of a different quality (and not just in the sense of camera work). Now each of directors has to edit their short film. They have two camera operators to help who are invested in the material but their approaches are different. Our

experience is that although this kind of workshops will not result in a good film, they are extremely inspiring, and directors and camera operators, who will have to make a documentary during their studies, will start from a more mature technical level, which is proved by every exam they take. That is why I am very pleased with the results of the documentary workshops, which does not alter the fact that we are still analysing the formula critically and trying to improve it.

The e-book 'How to Design a Documentary Film' ('Jak przygotować projekt filmu dokumentalnego')⁸ (2016) can be considered a sort of summary of my views on a documentary, in both a practical and educational sense. The idea of the e-book came from Krzysztof Kopczyński, its co-author as well as an award-winning producer of documentaries, including my own 'Kites', and the University of Warsaw, which expanded its offer of e-books. Over one hundred pages contain our reflections and experiences, Kopczyński's as a producer, mine as a director. However, the line between our perspectives is hardly clear-cut and they frequently mix and complement each other. Moreover, the electronic format enabled us to use films, and we invited other documentary makers, including among others Hanna Polak, Anna Wydra, Maria Zmarz-Koczanowicz, Jacek Petrycki, Jerzy Śladkowski, to share their thoughts and expertise.

Another teaching experience, which was completely different but not less significant for me, was six years in the Academy of Music in Katowice, where I directed diploma productions of the Vocal-Acting Department students preparing to work in opera houses. During this time I directed ten productions, including four musical ones. The work with the Vocal Department students is completely different than with, for example, students at the Theatre Academy. At entrance exams an acting talent is not given as much credit as an ear for music, voice and musical savvy. It is not surprising, but the modern audience expects opera singers to be good actors as well. Therefore, the Academy of

^{8 8} <http://kampus.come.uw.edu.pl/course/index.php?categoryid=8>

Music makes stage productions. It is a great challenge for a director, who cannot ignore a 'wooden' student in the cast. On the contrary, he or she has to be given an important role, which might help them to overcome their acting shortcomings. This is fascinating work. The cast is like the combination of professional and non-professional actors, when professionals are those endowed with natural talent. What counts the most is the final production, which has to be shown at least once in front of the audience. What is more, unlike the theatre where the production is rehearsed every day, here we have three-hour rehearsals once a week, so a director has to develop a new strategy because neither situational nor emotional memory 'turned on' once a week works the same way as during normal work on a theatrical production. The work conditions are not very professional: some of the cast are actors with potential, some, if not for their charming voices, should never be on stage, but the final performance must look professional anyway. Additionally, you cannot forget that you are a teacher. Students' development, especially in the case of poorer ones, is much more important and cannot be sacrificed. For a director it is like squaring the circle, but the satisfaction when it works is immense.

I usually used modern texts. I dedicated several rehearsals to getting to know my cast, since in the case of the Academy students I could not resort to their previous performances, because both students and teachers tend to focus on vocal emission, pitch, technique and so on, and on stage it is more important for them to be able to see a conductor than to develop their character. Preparing musical productions I always made a lot of effort to persuade the actors that the stage image of a singer is one thing, certainly useful at concerts, but presenting a particular character on stage is a completely different matter and requires finding acting techniques which do not belong to other stage personas. This banal thought is always a revelation for the Academy of Music students and they tend to oppose it. They are absolutely convinced that people go to the opera because of the famous names and voices, because of Kurzak or Beczała, rather than to hear the story of Carmen or Halka. From their viewpoint they are partially right, but a majority of the modern audience can appreciate not only musical and vocal skill, but also acting.

While preparing a diploma production, you often have to start with the basics. You have to 'diagnose' the most difficult cases so as to develop the most suitable directing-psychological strategy as well as choosing the text and the cast. From the third (out of ten non-musical productions I made) I always focused on the development of the students with no acting talent and cast the gifted ones in supporting roles (only once in seven years I encountered such a great performer that a teacher was defeated by a director). I suppose that the results of my work could only be seen by the Academy teachers and some students, which did not diminish my satisfaction. Viewers frequently said that there were no weak links in the cast. After several months of work there were not. Usually.

I would like to say a few words about two productions. 'Heathrow 14.05' is a musical with my libretto, Marek Jagielski's songs and the music composed by two very promising composition students from the Academy of Music Grzegorz Jurczyk and Krzysztof Wyglądacz. It was set in the Pyrzowice airport where the plane to London could not take off. It was perhaps the most difficult production I have ever made, but also the most sensible from the teaching point of view. The cast consisted of 16 students, each of whom had a musical and acting solo part written with their own needs in mind. Apart from that, they all took part in group scenes, where they had to deal with not only music but also Nina Minor's choreography, which demanded over-average fitness. We prepared the performance for two years (still a three-hour rehearsal once a week) and during this time none of the students dropped out. Even though in their fifth year some of them were already employed in professional companies in Poland and abroad, they all came back to Katowice every Wednesday at ten to complete the production. I see it as my greatest success that each of the actors felt that they were essential cogs in the machine. It was far from easy to maintain concentration and enthusiasm for such a long time, although it helped that everybody exceeded their abilities: each of them had their own challenge and their own triumph. The performance was invited to the VIII. Youth Opera Forum to Opera Nova in Bydgoszcz, which was quite a distinction. I have to admit, however, that I never repeated such an experiment, as for two years it required a great deal of

involvement while other projects, some of which could give me more satisfaction as a director, had to wait. Writing the libretto itself and making it suitable for the students' temperaments and needs was incredibly time-consuming, while most of the work was still ahead. Nevertheless, if 100 per cent attention is to be paid to diploma productions, the tailor-made text and arias are, in my opinion, a perfect strategy.

I had an interesting teaching experience in 2016 when three Chinese people joined the group. They did not speak Polish (one person did on a basic level) and their English was very poor. It was not much of an obstacle in their musical education, but when they had to perform in public it became a burning issue. I chose Anton Chekhov's one-act play 'A Marriage Proposal'. There are only four characters in the play and we had eleven people in the group, so I decided to repeat and repeat one scene: the failed marriage proposal which turns into an argument about the Oxen Meadows. Each pair of actors had a completely different strategy to perform the scene. The text was the same, but motivation, goals, personalities and biographies varied. The greatest challenge was to direct a Russian scene in Mandarin Chinese with only weak communication in English. Even matching the convention posed the problem because the Chinese students played it much more as a farce than the rest of the group. Since verbal arguments were virtually useless, we developed a strategy of situational understanding. I gave the Polish actors emotional tasks to improvise the scenes based on 'A Marriage Proposal' (for instance, she - 'absolve him', he - 'shirk the responsibility' or 'embarrass him' versus 'don't let her provoke you') and Chinese actors tried to guess what the tasks were and showed them in Chekhov's play. This method was amazingly successful. We managed to map the whole scene and develop the characters in quite a precise way. And most of all, the Chinese actors completely altered their approach to 'A Marriage Proposal' and rather than a farce they started seeing it as a drama.

For the final performance, one of the Chinese students prepared a scene in Polish, learned by ear, but he was accompanied by a character of a Polish friend, who helped him to propose and to pronounce the most difficult words. The other two played in Mandarin Chinese. It was no problem for the audience as they had already seen the fragment six

times in Polish, so they probably had even more fun watching a Chinese version without understanding a word. The scene was fiery, moving at times, and the laughter of the audience was controlled by the actors. The strategy of directing through example resulted in an effervescent production, in which every actor had their five minutes and nobody stood out from the rest. It was an extremely interesting experience for a director: how to visualize your vision without using verbal arguments.

All those student productions were ephemeral. After an opening night and sometimes two or three performances they vanished forever. I only have the record of the oldest two, 'Telefon' ('Telephone') and 'Siostrunie' ('The Nun'). This also shows that the Academy of Music itself treats those productions as teaching rather than artistic endeavours.

To my own astonishment, in my professional career, the satisfaction I have derived from directing (and I have had quite a lot to be satisfied with) is no greater than I get from teaching. I am the sixth generation of teachers in my family and I believe that directing can be learned but a person has to be born for teaching. To be a good teacher one needs a set of personality traits apart from knowledge and social skills. These include openness to another person, curiosity, and a kind of intuition which tells you when you should step back and allow a student to make mistakes and when you should press them to work harder. If a teacher uses only their intellect, they will never excel in their job.

Beata Dzionowicz