

12. Międzynarodowy Festiwal Literatury i Teatru  
**between.pomiędzy**  
Trójmiasto 10–16 maja 2021

TEATR ZAR.NET

JAROSŁAW FRET IN CONVERSATION WITH OCTAVIAN SAIU

Thursday, 13 May 2021, 17.30 (Gdańsk/Paris CEST)

LINK: <https://fb.me/e/2d34yY4Uy>

Teatr ZAR is a unique company. More than a company, it is a creative group of artists brought together by the same cause of finding the truth beyond the representation in theatre. Is there an ultimate truth, however? Jaroslaw Fret seems to believe that, and – like Grotowski, his glorious precursor, did once upon a time – he has embarked on a journey to find it. His stage language defies all definitions: it is close to performance art, but not the same. It is a form of anthropological theatre, yet not exactly that. It is music, or at least based on sound. Nevertheless, to place it in any such category would be insufficient. Zar is a phenomenon of authenticity. About that, about truth, about the body, about the encounter between the “performer” and the “spectator”, about faith in theatre during this troubled period... in a dialogue occasion by a new edition of Between.Pomiędzy Festival.



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**TeatrZAR.net** is a digital platform on which the company shares its work. The educational program consists of weekly lectures and meetings with creators regarding the sources, contexts and methods of theatre work, enriched with unique sound and visual recordings. The materials relate to the activities of the Mediterranean confraternities, Georgian polyphony, modal singing and irmoses. Lessons “Meetings in sound” discuss interesting music and voice issues. The artistic block includes a digital version of the performance “Anhelli. The Howl” using most of the sources and techniques discussed. The TeatrZAR.net project was co-financed by the National Centre for Culture Poland as a part of the “Culture in Net” programme.

LINK: <http://www.teatrzar.net/en/>

#### **SPEAKERS:**

**JAROSŁAW FRET** is a founder and leader of Teatr ZAR, theatre director and actor. He is Director of the Grotowski Institute, lecturer at the PWST National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków (Branch in Wrocław) and President of the Board of Curators of the European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016 and Curator of its Theatre Programme. In 1999–2002 he organized a series of expeditions to Georgia, Armenia and Iran, conducting research into the oldest forms of religious music of Eastern Christianity. In the following years, together with members of Teatr ZAR, he led expeditions to Mount Athos in Greece, Sardinia, Corsica, Armenia, Turkey and Israel. He has directed four performance pieces with Teatr ZAR. Teatr ZAR’s *Gospels of Childhood* triptych has been seen in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Athens, Belgrade, Edinburgh, Florence, Madrid, Paris, Sibiu, Cairo, New Delhi and Seoul. In November 2013 he completed work on *Armine, Sister*, for which he developed an original musical dramaturgy and special stage architecture. He lectures and leads work sessions in Poland and abroad. His awards and honours include: Best New Music Theater for Teatr ZAR from *Los Angeles Times* (2009); Wrocław Theatre Prize for the *Gospels of Childhood* triptych (2010); the prestigious Total Theatre Award for Physical/Visual Theatre and the Herald Angel at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (2012). He has originated and coordinated numerous Polish and international projects of the Grotowski Institute, including the Grotowski Year 2009, Masters in Residence, the International Theatre Festival *The World as a Place of Truth* and

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the Theatre Olympics 2016 in Wrocław. His efforts led to the opening of new locations of the Grotowski Institute: Na Grobli Studio (2010) and the Bakery, a centre for performing arts (2019).

Cultivating an ethos of ensemble work, **Teatr ZAR** develops productions through a long process of creating its own theatrical language, which draws on music from numerous traditions found in the East and West. The company is a multinational group that was formed during annual research expeditions to Georgia between 1999 and 2003. During these expeditions, they collected a wealth of musical material, including a core of centuries-old polyphonic songs that have their roots in the beginning of the human era and are probably the oldest forms of polyphony in the world. *Zar* is a name of funeral songs performed by the Svaneti tribe who inhabit the high regions of the Caucasus in north-west Georgia. Teatr ZAR attempts to demonstrate that theatre does not only relate to *thea* (Greek ‘seeing’), but it is something that above all should be heard.

ZAR brings back theatre as it was before art ruptured into different disciplines and styles. Its work addresses themes that, in the contemporary world, seem to be reserved only for the religious domain. It comes from conviction, influenced by Polish Romantic ideas, that art is not only complementary to religion but can fill the dynamic chasm between the everyday and transcendent life. Juliusz Osterwa, one of the greatest figures of 20th-century Polish theatre who tried to put these ideas into practice – and one whose ideas had a great impact on Jerzy Grotowski – once wrote: ‘God created theatre for those for whom the church does not suffice.’

The *Gospels of Childhood* triptych is a culmination of more than 10 years of work with ancient sacred songs. The triptych consists of three performances, played also separately: *Overture*, *Caesarean Section: Essays on Suicide* and *Anbelli: The Calling*. In 2009, the triptych premiered in London at the Barbican Centre and then was presented in Los Angeles, Wrocław, Florence, San Francisco, Chicago, Sibiu, Legnica, Szczecin and Bydgoszcz. Parts of the work were staged, among others, in Athens, Edinburgh, Madrid, Belgrade, Budapest, Paris, Cairo, Seoul, New Delhi, Boston. The triptych was named Best New Music Theatre by *The Los Angeles Times* in 2009, and won the Wrocław Theatre Prize in October 2010. The second part of the triptych, *Caesarean Section*, was shown as part of the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh in August 2012, earning Teatr ZAR a prestigious Total Theatre Award for Physical/Visual Theatre and a Herald Angel Award.

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In 2011, the company started work on *Armine, Sister*, a project dedicated to the history and culture of the Armenian people and to the Armenian genocide. Teatr ZAR's performance *Armine, Sister* premiered on 28 November 2013 at the Na Grobli Studio of the Grotowski Institute in Wrocław. Since then, apart from Wrocław, it has been staged in Warsaw, London, Oslo, Rome, Paris, Szczecin, Sibiu, Florence and San Francisco.

Teatr ZAR's latest performance works, *Medeas: On Getting Across* and *Anbelli: The Howl*, were first performed, respectively, at the Theatre Olympics in Wrocław in 2016 and at the Theatre Olympics in Japan in 2019.

Professor **OCTAVIAN SAIU** is a scholar and professional theatre critic. He holds a PhD in Theatre Studies from National University of Theatre and Film (NUTF) in Romania, with a thesis about theatrical space, and another PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Otago in New Zealand, with a thesis about Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco. He completed his Post-Doc in Modern Literature at the University of Otago, and has been awarded his Habilitation in Theatre and Performing Arts. He teaches in the Postgraduate Programme of NUTF, the Doctoral School of Sibiu University and the Centre of Excellence in Visual Studies of the University of Bucharest. He was Visiting Fellow at the University of London, School of Advanced Study, and is Visiting Professor at universities in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Beijing and Lisbon. He has offered master classes at other universities in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as the Grotowski Institute.

He has been actively involved, as Conference Chair and Invited Speaker, in several major theatre and academic events around the world, including the Theatre Olympics, Wuzhen Theatre Festival, as well as Edinburgh International Festival, where he was Chair of the Samuel Beckett Conference in 2013. Since 2004 he has been Chair of the Conferences of Sibiu International Theatre Festival. He is Adjunct Secretary General of the International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC) and President of the Romanian Section – Theatre Studies of IATC. He has published academic articles in several international journals, as well as eleven books on theatre. He received the Critics' Award in 2010 and the Award of the Union of Theatre Artists (UNITER) in 2013. In 2020, on the National Day of Culture, the President of Romania awarded him the Order of Cultural Merit.

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Also at the Twelfth Between.Pomiędzy Festival

**ANHELLI: THE HOWL – A SHORT INTRODUCTION**

**JAROSŁAW FRET IN CONVERSTION WITH TOMASZ WIŚNIEWSKI (in Polish)**

**Tuesday, 13 May 2021, 21.00 CET**

**LINK:**

*Anhelli: The Howl* is a musical performance piece composed of Armenian songs, Greek hymns and Orthodox irmoses. In “Anhelli: The Howl” Teatr ZAR asks the fundamental question of the inability to experience and express death. Death cannot be told, nor can it be represented, so the company focuses on those few minutes of mourning when mourners gather in the house of the departed to bid farewell to her, to send her off. However, this is not just a farewell, but a real disconnection, sending away the soul, perhaps freeing it. Death is not just a moment of transition but a process that takes time. The piece uses the protagonist of Juliusz Słowacki’s poem “Anhelli” and the characters that accompany him – one of whom is a woman, his beloved, and the other an angel – to explore the process of spiritual separation. “Anhelli: The Howl” speaks only of a few minutes of farewell, but in fact the whole process would take an hour, forty days, a year, or even more, as if time has lost its linearity measured by the clock.

**LINK:** <http://www.teatrzar.net/en/anhelli-the-howl-online-performances/>

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