

Poles apart

A Polish company focuses on ideas and principles, not actors, in its dramatic and approach to theatre.

By Philip O'Brien

Polish theatre director Andrzej Wajda would probably agree with Australian poet Les Murray's complaint that the chattering classes get in the way of art. "There's not much point in talking about art," Murray has argued, "people should spend their time engaging with it instead of talking about it."

Wajda's company Scena Plastyczna – literally "visual stage" – specialises in the theatre of images rather than words. Based at the Catholic University of Lubin in Poland, it's an ensemble that challenges the very notion of theatre. And their production of *Moisture* is being presented by the Embassy of Poland at the Street Theatre next week as part of the National Multicultural Festival.

It's also theatre without actors: in the western theatrical sense, Wajda says. "Impersonal actors serve merely as props in these productions. It's not a theatre of the individual. It renounces both a language of gesture and dramaturgy based on characterisation. The dramatis personae in this theatre are ideas and principles rather than actors."

Moisture uses physical movements and visual images to convey its story. Creator

Leszek Madzik has described what the audience sees in the following terms: "Drops are dripping from the human body, [it's] impossible to make it dry, it endlessly drips. A body, suspended in the space of life, suffers. It does not matter how much we try to take this sweat away from him; it will remain with him forever. Until his death."

Moisture has been described as theatre which "perceives existence as pain, beauty juxtaposed with the darkness of non-existence, it stresses the interplay of light and darkness, it has no temporal spatial limits".

A soundtrack by Jan A.P. Kaczmarek adds to the strong visual language of *Moisture*, creating what one commentator has described as "a theatre of obsession ... of images associated in man's unconscious".

Another critic has likened the ensemble's work to "monodies of image and sound [creating] pure material moments of passing time".

In this way theatre will always be superior to film, director Wajda says. "The most beautiful thing is that a performance [should] die along with the spectator. It's a natural process just like real life itself. We experience mortality intensely



because we know that theatre lives just as long as we live."

Moisture

Where: The Street Theatre, Childers Street, Civic.

When: Sunday, February 9 to Tuesday, February 11, at 7.30pm.

Tickets: Adults \$20, concessions \$18, students \$10.

Bookings: 6247 1223.