



Our Mission

To enlighten audiences to the greatest Polish and American actress, Helena Modjeska. Modjeska was one of the most prominent figures in American history and former resident of Orange County. By telling her story, we wish to inspire everyone, especially those who cannot see or believe their own potential.

Contact us at: marketing@helenamodjeska.com

www.helenamodjeska.com

About the Play

"Modjeska! The Artist's Dream" was created in collaboration with Ewa Boryczko, writer and actress, Kris Cieply, producer and collector of Helena Modjeska memorabilia and Jon Kellam, director.

Being long time enthusiasts of Helena Modjeska's tremendous legacy, we have set out to create a truthful theatrical portrait of the greatest Polish and American actress that will stimulate the eye, inspire the mind, and move the heart.

We bring you a unique solo performance based on actual reviews, poetry, fragments of autobiography and letters written by Helena Modjeska.

Ewa Boryczko portrays the famous actress, Helena Modjeska. Her beginnings in Anaheim, her breaking into the American theater scene in San Francisco and New York, her demanding lifestyle and her tremendous love for Art, Arden and Poland. Despite many obstacles in her life, Modjeska prevails and reigns as the most successful Shakespearean actress during the second half of the 19th century. She performed alongside such prominent figures of the American Theater as Edwin Booth.

One of the most important themes of the play, "ambition versus happiness", is expressed in the poem "The Artist's Dream", written by Modjeska herself and translated by Oscar Wilde. Her poem serves as a connecting thread throughout the entire play.

The performance directed by Jon Kellam, resident director of Actors' Gang in Los Angeles, is dynamic and moving. The simple set design consisting only of a wooden chair and a metal mannequin makes it suitable for variety of venues.

Costumes were designed by Malgorzata Grzywnowicz and Malgorzata Wegiel, graduates of the Cracow School of Art and Fashion Design. This designers' duet created stunning gowns which reflect the romanticism and craftsmanship of Modjeska's era. One of the gowns is a replica of Helena Modjeska's Rosalind costume from Shakespeare's "As You Like it".

Ewa Boryczko, actress/writer

Ewa Boryczko is a native of Krakow, Poland. In 1990, after graduating from the Lyceum in Krakow, she came to study English in Chicago's Truman College. She continued her education at Wright College, where she received her Associate of Art Degree. From 1992-1997, she worked as a model for Arlene Wilson Talent Agency.

In 1998 she entered the acting program at Chicago's Columbia College and in 2002 graduated with honors. While still in college, she collaborated with Oobleck Theater, writing and producing her short play entitled "Moth".

From 1997-2004, she performed at local theaters in Chicago, working with Hermit Productions, Prop Theater, Chicago's Cultural Center and Ping Chong Company from New York. From 2000-2007, she wrote and directed several children's plays and worked with over 400 kids and teenagers. In Chicago she helped establish a Youth Program, "Stop Violence" in collaboration with Polish -American Association. Currently she shares her time between Poland and the United States working in theater, commercials and modeling.

Recent projects include: "Poland" Promotional Film for EU, Poland; Delma National Commercial, Poland; Aviva National Commercial, Poland; "Ballade of Warsaw's Mermaid", Poland; "Helena", Solo Performance, Los Angeles, Liberty Direct National Commercial, Poland;

Jon Kellam, director

Jon Kellam is currently co-artistic director and co-founding member of Zoo District Theatre, a resident director and member of the Actors' Gang, and a member of Ensemble Studio Theatre LA three critically acclaimed theatre companies in Los Angeles.

Theatre companies he has worked with nationally include Steppenwolf, The Organic Theatre, New Crime, The National Jewish Theatre, American Blues Theatre, Absolute Theatre, Baltwick, Chicago Actors Ensemble, Strawdog in Chicago. Playwrights Horizons, PS 122, Lincoln Center, Circle in the Square, Workhouse Theatre in New York City. The Los Angeles Theatre Center, Open Fist, Sacred Fools, EST LA, Actors' Gang, Zoo District, Theatre Theatre, REDCAT in Los Angeles and The Powerhouse Theatre in Brisbane Australia.

Directing credits in Los Angeles; at the Actors' Gang, Tartuffe, Drums In The Night, The Exonerated, national tour, The Trial of the Catonsville Nine which also toured nationally and to Brisbane Australia. Kellam assisted Simon Abkarian on Loves Labours Lost. For The Edge-of-the-World Theatre Festival, The Ass by Parviz Sayyad. For Zoo District he directed and co-created the award winning production of Nosferatu... Angel Of The Final Hour, and co-directed and co-created Home...The Search For The Lost Tablet Of Ur. For Theatre Theater served as fight director on Beggars In The House Of Plenty, directed by Larry Moss and also served as fight coordinator and movement consultant for the Ruskin Group production of Cowboy Mouth in Santa Monica, and Orpheus Descending at Theatre Theater. In New York City, Kellam directed and co-created Monsoon Child at the Harold Clurman.



The Beginnings

It all started in Chicago, in 1998, with a book "Memories and Impressions" the autobiography of Helena Modjeska, which I found at a local thrift store. Being from Poland, I of course heard of Helena Modjeska (Modrzejewska), but could not really tell much about this remarkable actress... So I read the book,

What an eye opener it was!

Helena Modjeska came to America in 1876 at the age 37, not knowing the English language. Within the first two years she conquered the American stage. With 250 roles and thousands of performances over the years, she was the unprecedented queen of the World's Theater, setting high standards for many on stage as well as off stage. She always embraced freedom and showed compassion towards those in need.

Helena Modjeska inspired me so much that I made a promise to one day tell her amazing story.

A few years passed by...

Finally, in November of 2008, I visited Arden - Helena Modjeska's Historical House in Santiago Canyon, California and four months later, on April 18th 2009, I presented there a short solo performance entitled "Helena". This intimate performance was held in the gardens of Arden and marked the 100th anniversary of Helena Modjeska's Death.

There I also met Kris Ciepły, a long time enthusiast of the actress. For years he has been preserving her memory by collecting much of her memorabilia (pictures, reviews, books, publications, paintings, her personal objects, etc) and sponsored research on this subject.

We decided to join forces and a few months later the play "Modjeska! The Artist's Dream" was born.