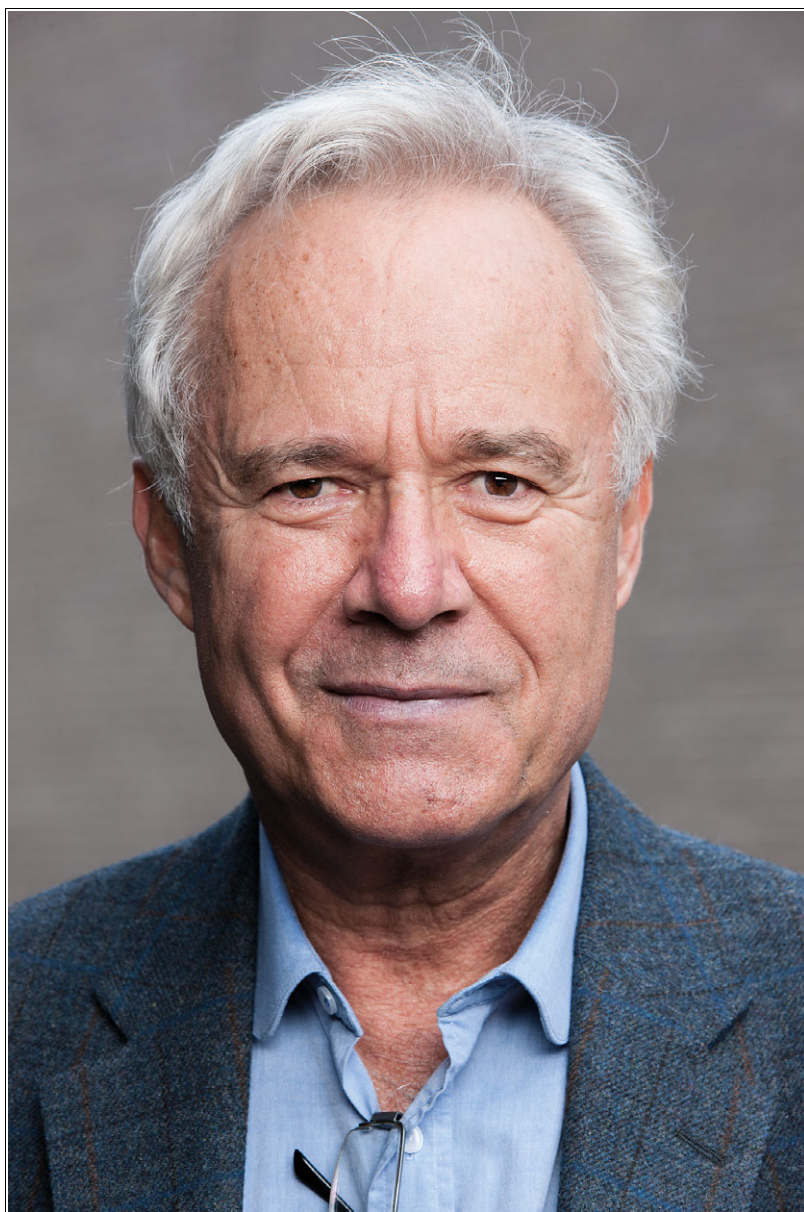


Maria Shevtsova

Shakespeare on the Baltic Shore: Jerzy Limon (1950–2021)

No one could ever have imagined that a man of such vision, vigour, buoyancy, and joy as Jerzy Limon would succumb to Covid-19 and suddenly, swiftly, leave this earth. Jerzy's death on 3 March 2021 was an immense shock to those who love and admire him and so to



those among us who had contributed to the volume published in 2020 in his honour. The occasion for the book – *This Treasure of Theatre: Shakespeare and the Arts from the Early Modern Period to the Twenty-First Century* (Gdańsk: Słowo/Obraz Terytoria) – was his seventieth birthday, and sadly, so very sadly, it now looks like a memorial wreath.

Jerzy, Professor of English at the University of Gdańsk, was a renowned Shakespeare scholar and author of numerous articles, chapters of collected essays, edited books, and monographs both in Polish and English. The latter include *Szekspir bez cenzury: Erotyczny żart na scenie elżbietańskiej* (*Shakespeare Uncensored: The Erotic Pun on the Elizabethan Stage*, 2018); *The Chemistry of the Theatre* (2010); and *Gentlemen of a Company: English Players in Central and Eastern Europe c. 1590–c. 1660* (1985). This last title, from Cambridge University Press, celebrated Jerzy's research into the adventurous theatre troupes that had regularly left this sceptred isle to perform in such Baltic cities as Gdańsk and Königsberg. They had also travelled inland, notably to Austria, thereby further promoting cultural links with the European continent in addition to the trade routes already established.

Discoveries like these inspired Jerzy to mark their historical significance for British–Polish relations by founding the Gdańsk Shakespeare Festival in 1997, although he had nurtured the idea long before. With the help of archives,

visual documents, and the architect Renato Rizzi, he was able to construct and inaugurate in 2014 an Elizabethan-style theatre in the grounds of the fencing school where, 400 years earlier, English players had performed. Named the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre and placed under Jerzy's artistic directorship, it is home to the Festival whose broad artistic range, imaginative curation, and participation of high-ranking world theatre companies and directors have made it one of the prominent festivals of Europe.

All of us who have seen this theatre grow from a gleam in Jerzy's eye to its successive stages wore an obligatory hard helmet for safety as he showed us about and gave us insight into his plans for its future. They were thrilling experiences, shared also by HRH The Prince of Wales, who had his own, personal, tutorials as he was guided around the site in his role of patron of this new venture.

Accolades for Jerzy's major achievements have been many, encompassing the OBE granted him in 2014 and the Pragnell Shakespeare Award, presented at Stratford-upon-Avon in 2019. *New Theatre Quarterly* joins his wonderful team at the Gdańsk Shakespeare Theatre, led by executive director Joanna Śnieżko-Misterec, and Agnieszka Żukowska, among his close academic collaborators, in saluting a warm and forward-looking human being whose remaining worldly tasks were not yet done, but cruelly taken away from him.