

## THE STAGE NAMES OF POLISH INTERWAR ARTISTS

**Key words:** Polish stage names, Polish artistic pseudonyms, interwar period, film actors, theatre actors

The purpose of this article is to discuss the various stage names of performing artists of the interwar period in Poland — singers, dancers, actors — but also including film and theatre directors, who, even though they did not actually appear on stage or on the film set, also needed attractive names to be placed on posters alongside those of actors. In contrast with pen names (cf. Świerczyńska, 1983), such artistic pseudonyms have not attracted much scholarly interest among Polish onomasticians to date. It is characteristic in that respect that a classic reference work on anthroponymy in Poland, Rzetelska-Feleszko (1998), does not mention stage pseudonyms. Probably the only larger Polish synthetic work to have devoted some space to these onyms is Zawodzińska-Bukowiec (2014).

The reason why individual artists whose stage names have been excerpted here are not identified by profession is that often strict categorization would not have been possible, considering the fact that many of them combined at least two professions. Thus Ada Sari was both an opera singer and an actress; Jerzy Dal-Atan acted and wrote scripts; Leon Trystan was an actor, a film director and a scriptwriter; Edmund Minowicz combined cabaret dancing and singing with acting and theatre directing; Bolesław Franciszek Horski was not only a singer and an actor but a theatre director as well. What is more, many young women, once they achieved popularity as dancers, went into film acting since the developing cinematic industry offered them more exciting work and more public acclaim — this was the case of Alma Kar, Hanna Karwowska, or Loda Halama. According to some accounts, the film directors were willing to employ professional dancers. Filmmaker Arnold Waszyński, for instance, was of the opinion that they were easy to work with on a film set: their bodies were flexible, and their facial expression — professional (cf. Pieńkowski, 2017, p. 23). However, according to Rogowski (2017, p. 415), the transition from cabaret dancing to

traditional, high-brow theatre was rather rare; one of the lucky few who managed to achieve this feat was Lena Żelichowska.

Stage names were used by artists for several reasons. First, they helped separate private from professional life — or stage activities from other, “more serious” professional activities; this was especially important in view of the fact that in the analysed period, acting, singing or dancing was frequently considered a somewhat suspicious way of making a living, unworthy of an upper-class member or of an “honest woman”. Moreover, in the case of a common birth name, stage names individualized an artist, and thus facilitated the creation of a stage persona.<sup>1</sup> Apart from that, they may also have been useful in fostering a career abroad, either helping the artist to blend into a foreign working environment, or making the name easier for foreign audiences to pronounce and remember; a case in point may be Bogusław Samborski, for whom the assumption of the name *Gottlieb*<sup>2</sup> *Sambor* was to help him in his acting career in wartime Austria. Finally, and rather similarly to the case of a foreign career, an artist may want to avoid prejudice. This was especially true of Jewish performers in pre-war Poland (but not of those who acted or sang in Yiddish and whose target audience was Jewish).

Pseudonyms in stage career of performing artists were extremely frequent before WW2. In fact, they were so much taken for granted that a refusal to take one was so unusual as to merit a mention. Actress Renata Radojewska recollected:

The producer who “dared” to offer a film part to a girl unknown to anybody, imposed a strict condition before signing the contract: he demanded that I change my surname... To any name, any but Renata Radojewska. For anyone else, this would have been no problem to worry about — but I dug my heels in. I must remain Renata Radojewska, and that is it. And just imagine: I won. (Quoted after Rogowski, 2017, p. 224; own translation).

The phenomenon did not go unnoticed. In 1936 Kazimierz Brzeski complained in one of the periodicals devoted to the stage:

Poland is the only country in the whole world where artists use pseudonyms that sound completely foreign [...] Obviously, a person working in the same line of business is well aware of the fact that many a Rita Klyx, Nina Caraldi, Ineza Van Byck, is in fact our good old Basia, Niusia, Władzia and Helenka, with domicile in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Sochaczew or Piotrków Trybunalski, but an average audience member, not versed in our artistic matters, is totally flummoxed and generally confused!

Naturally this craze of pseudonyms is a product of snobbery, of the lack of self-criticism, of poor orientation; it may be, out of necessity, tolerated in Poland, but one should strongly con-

<sup>1</sup> A special case was the situation when the birth name of a budding artist had already been in use by another professional. This was what happened to Wojciech Wasilewski, who as a result assumed the stage name *Wojciech Wojtecki*.

<sup>2</sup> The given name *Gottlieb* is considered a semantic equivalent of the Polish *Bogusław* or *Bogumił*.

demn the antics (I can't think of any other term!) of a relatively numerous group of artists who, going to appear abroad, hide themselves under a thick veil of a foreign pseudonym, as if they were ashamed of belonging to their Country (Brzeski, 1936, p. 6; own translation).

Piquancy is added to these words if one considers that their author — real name Kazimierz Fliederbaum — was himself writing these words under a pseudonym (cf. Fox, 2007, pp. 55–56; Jaworski, 2016, p. 19). Interestingly enough, similar concerns are occasionally voiced today:

I once wondered what motivates Polish artists to accept foreign nicknames. I'm looking at the poster of the announced event in the club X. I'm looking and I can't believe it that in a club like X, only foreign stars will play. Although not very well known, but still from the "west". However, a moment of analysis, the magic of Googling these names and... another big surprise — they are all Poles!!!

Well, what interested me, therefore, was: why is it so, why are Polish artists ashamed to choose and use names that in their native language sound somehow normal. Would they be an object of mockery and biting jokes if they were called, for example, Tomek Kowalski, Mariusz Gronkiewicz?<sup>3</sup>

Some artists who debuted later, in the 1950s or 1960s, still assumed pseudonyms (*Czesława Gospodarek*, née *Cieślak* > *Violetta Villas*; *Czesław Wydrzycki* > *Czesław Niemen*), but generally in the years after 1945 this custom was going into gradual decline. Although to some extent it is still continued to this day, it is probably not as frequent nowadays: while there exist such names as *Bodo Kox* (birth name *Bartosz Koszala*), *Sara May* (*Katarzyna Szczolek*) or *Yach Paszkiewicz* (*Jan Paszkiewicz*), nevertheless surnames like *Mucha* ('a fly') or *Gruszka* ('a pear'), carried by contemporary Polish actresses, would probably have been replaced with better-sounding pseudonyms in the interwar period. So would the surnames of some contemporary Polish opera singers: *Kurzak* (cf. *kura* 'hen, chicken', *kurzak* 'chicken manure'; dial. 'a person whose job is to make charcoal') or *Beczala* (cf. *beczeć* 'to bleat; to sing out of tune'). There is reason to believe that pressure used to be exerted on the artists by theatre directors or impresarios to invent stage names; sometimes those directors themselves suggested suitable monikers to their protégés. Thus the stage name *Vittoria Calma* (real name *Wiktoria Kotulak*) was reportedly invented by her singing teacher Adam Didur (cf. Waldorff, 1984, p. 137).

The list of excerpted stage names (appended at the end of the article) contains over two hundred items, with the corresponding birth names provided in brackets. Since the list is by no means exhaustive, and — due to the limited availability of data — not representative either (as discussed in more detail underneath, it is difficult today to establish the birth names of many stage or film artists), only tentative and very provisional quantitative conclusions may be drawn. For

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ftb.pl/temat/70597> (accessed Jan. 11, 2018); own translation.

instance, in about half of the cases, the real given name (or one of the real given names) was retained in the stage name, while the surname underwent a change. The opposite phenomenon, with the given name changed and the surname left intact, has been observed in only about 10 per cent of cases. The remainder are stage names in which both elements — the given name and the surname — have been altered, often by shortening and/or otherwise modifying the original given name. This fact would seem to be in contrast with the opinion of Zawodzińska-Bukowiec, who stated that “the first element of the structure of the artistic pseudonym nearly always remained equal to the official registry form of the chosen given name” (2014, p. 240; own translation).

Interestingly, only 84 names on the list belong to men. While this could be a side effect of the non-representativeness of the collection of excerpted onyms, another possible explanation might be the fact that due to the stigma attached to cabaret and film acting women were more likely to conceal their identity.

Most of the discussed stage names were styled to look like real names,<sup>4</sup> i.e. they were composed of a given name, often in an unofficial, diminutive or diminutive-looking form (*Tola, Zula, Mila, Ina, Jaga, Bela, Lala, Pola, Dela, Mura*) and occasionally with reduplication (*Zizi, Lili*), and of a surname-like component, sometimes exotic-sounding, like *Ordeyg, Dal-Atan, Sari, Ari* or *Kittay*.<sup>5</sup> Very few were mononyms, e.g. *Tim-Tom* (a pseudonym of Konrad Kusowitzky, which coexisted with his other stage names *Konrad Runowiecki* and *Konrad Tom*), *Ref-Ren* (Feliks Stanisław Konarski), or *Reri* (Anna Irma Ruahrei Chevalier). In the case of some mononyms, the audience was well aware of the artist’s full name, which was also used, on posters or in the rolling credits for example, alongside the mononym. Thus it was obvious to cinema- or theatre-goers that *Dodek* was Adolf Dymśza, and *Messalka* was Lucyna Messal (incidentally, neither of these were their bearers’ real names).

The analysis of the stage names and their comparison with the respective real names reveals that minority names — mostly German/Jewish or Russian ones — were often made to look Polish (typically ending with *-ski/-cki* or *-icz* and including the feminine suffixes for women): *Nierensztajn* > *Nireńska*, *Hertz* > *Barwiński*, *Loretz* > *Milecki*, *Higier* > *Dromlewiczowa*, *Blomberg* > *Halicz*, *Raabe* > *Mankiewiczówna*, *Prorubnikow* > *Sławska*, *Priva Krakauer* >

<sup>4</sup> According to Zawodzińska-Bukowiec (2014, p. 289), in Polish terminology such pseudonyms are called *aliofiktonimy*. Some more Polish terminology applicable here would be: *poliglonim* (pseudonyms in a foreign language — such as *Nora Ney*, *Harry Cort* and others), *allonim* (using the surname of a real person — e.g. *Negri*), *akronim* (built on the basis of the first letters or syllables of the real name — e.g. *Marten*), *anagram* (e.g. *Sielański*). Cf. Zawodzińska-Bukowiec (2014, pp. 289–292).

<sup>5</sup> Contrary to appearances, this is a real surname, already attested in Lwów in 1884.

*Alina Halska, Tamara > Mira*.<sup>6</sup> Alternatively, they also used to be styled to look Italian (*Maria Apfelbaum > Lena Mirelli, Leopold Blumental > Leo Belmont*), French (*Chawowa > Chaveau*), English, or vaguely “international”: *Daniel Kirschenfinkel > Danny Kaden, Tennenbaum > Marten, Mayblum > Mayflauer* [!], *Adolf Loewinsohn > Adam Aston, Fogiel > Fogg, Liebgold > Liliana*.

Both the motivation and the method of coining a particular artistic pseudonym (as well as the possible relationship with the birth name) is often difficult to establish today. The stories that can be found in memoirs or in the press of the time may shed some light — but they may equally well have been invented to help build the legend of film or stage stars and to satisfy the curiosity of the media or the fans. Eugeniusz Bodo, for instance, reportedly coined his stage surname using the first syllable of his real given name (Bohdan) and the first syllable of one of his mother’s given names (Dorota). According to Pola Negri’s claims, her stage surname was assumed after the Italian poet Ada Negri.<sup>7</sup> Ina Benita (real name Janina Ferow-Buřhak<sup>8</sup>), to take another example, is said to have derived her stage surname from the name of a Latin American drink based on banana extract and rum, whereas the name *Ina* is a shortening of her real given name. An alternative explanation links the stage surname with the given name of Benito Mussolini, rising to power at the time, and the hope of the budding actress that such a similarity might help foster her international career.<sup>9</sup> It is not the only case when the stories explaining the origin of a stage name tend to be contradictory. For example Adolf Dymśa (real name *Adolf Bagiński*) reportedly owed his stage name to his sister Zuzanna. He is said to have invented for himself the Italian-sounding moniker *Scipio del Scampio*; however, when somebody phoned from the theatre in which he was to act, asking for the pseudonym to be printed on a poster, his sister allegedly could not find the slip of paper with the scribbled name and improvised *Dymśa* instead. According to a different story, *Dymśa* was the surname of an MP to a Russian parliament of the time, found in an almanac-calendar of a popular daily „Kurier Poranny”, after a secretary of the theatre „Miraż” suggested that the budding actor should invent a pseudonym for himself.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> In this case only the given name was changed in the attempt to conceal the Ukrainian roots of the actress (Rogowski, 2017, p. 314).

<sup>7</sup> This did not stop the actress from suing the producers of sun protection cream *Negri*, when it appeared on the Polish market (cf. Pieńkowski, 2017, p. 38).

<sup>8</sup> *Ferow* was a Russified version of the surname *Ferowska*.

<sup>9</sup> <http://stare-kino.pl/biografie/6-ina-benita> (accessed Dec. 29, 2017). On the basis of Gacek, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> <http://styl-gwiazd-populada.pl/news-adolf-dymśa-oskarżony-o-zdrade,nId,2254890> (accessed Dec. 29, 2017).

However, the shape of some pseudonyms allows us today to attempt at guessing its origin. Helena *Bellari-Czystogórska* (real surname *Reinberg*), an opera singer of Jewish origin, evidently obtained the second part of her stage surname by translating its constituent parts from German into Polish, while the first, Italian-sounding part was probably chosen arbitrarily and owed its existence to the fact that the artist since 1912 worked in Italy. We can also surmise that the actor and director Aleksander Marten (real name *Marek Tennenbaum*) built his stage surname from the first syllables of his birth name, whereas Henryk Szaro (real name Henocho Szapiro) deleted the middle syllable from his surname, simultaneously also de-Hebraizing his given name. The reorganisation of syllables or letters in a name or in its part appears to have been an option as well: *Ludwik Latajner* > *Kiwdul Talajner*, *Nasielski* > *Sielański*, *Tadeusz Bogdanowicz* > *Tawicz*, *Dąbrowska* > *Vorbond* (cf. Pieńkowski, 2017, p. 40). Two sons of actor Stanisław Knake-Zawadzki, who also became actors, coined their stage names from their real given names, thus becoming *Marian Mariański* and *Karol Karliński*. So did Stanisław Bratman, who appeared on stage as *Stanisław Stanisławski*, Wojciech Wasilewski > *Wojciech Wojtecki*,<sup>11</sup> and Henryka Banówna — to become *Henia Henry*. In a somewhat similar vein, Janusz Pik assumed the stage name of *Jan Janusz*, at the same time transforming his given name into a new surname; so did Adolf Hipolit Steibelt, who became *Hipolit Adolfi*, and Konrad Kusewitzky — *Tom Konrad*. Władysław Ladis evidently invented a stage surname for himself inspired by the Latin form of his given name (*Ladislaus*).

An interesting, often (although not always) artificial<sup>12</sup> stage surname is the very short *-ski-* or *-cki-*ending type, frequently preceded by the liquids *r/l* (less often by some other sonorant), in turn preceded by a vowel: *Belski*, *Delska*, *Gucki*, *Horski*, *Kański*, *Korska*, *Mińska*, *Mirska*, *Morska*, *Olska*, *Sarska*, *Solski*, *Starski*, *Wiński*, *Żelska*. By comparing them with the birth names of the respective artists one can see that sometimes the pseudonyms resulted from the shortening of the birth name by deleting the first or the middle syllable(s): *Pindelska* > *Delska*, *Zgorzelska* > *Żelska*, *Gulanicki* > *Gucki*, *Smosarska* > *Sarska*; or that there is at least some phonetic similarity between the birth name and the stage name: *Konarek* > *Korska*, *Loewinsohn* > *Wiński*. Similarly built surnames appear in literary onomastics, cf. *Jan Omski* (from the novel “Romans Teresy Hennert” by Zofia Nałkowska). Interestingly, such an archetypal Polish stage name (or, also, a literary surname) survived World War 2, even though the need for an artistic pseudonym in the performing arts does not seem as strong today as before

<sup>11</sup> *Wojtek* is a diminutive of *Wojciech*.

<sup>12</sup> In the sense of a surname that has not developed naturally, independently of the possible transmission of the stage name onto an artist's family.

World War 2. As a case in point might serve the stage name of two post-WW2 singers *Rena Rolska* (real name Regina Rollinger-Jonkajtys) and *Lucyna Arska* (real name Lucyna Adrjańska), or the fictional character *Lena Barska*, the heroine of an eponymous contemporary slice-of-life TV serial.<sup>13</sup>

It is perhaps no coincidence that certain stage surnames resemble artificial surnames which in the past used to be given to illegitimate offspring of a nobleman by cutting some part of the surname. Examples of such artificial shorter surnames can be found in Bystróż 1993, pp. 90–91: *Zebrzydowski > Idowski*, *Zwoliński > Woliński*, *Milkoski > Koski*. The status of the people who appeared on stage was similarly dubious. On the one hand they enjoyed immense popularity, in line with the spirit of the times when “the importance of aristocracy was lessening, old families were losing its social standing fast, replaced by socially advanced arrivistes, among them shining film stars with fabulous earnings” (Koper, 2015, p. 24; own translation). On the other hand, as Pieńkowski (2017, p. 78) notes, before World War 2, despite the great popularity of film, it did not enjoy such a good reputation as the theatre. In consequence, many self-respecting well-to-do families considered it improper, degrading, humiliating and immoral for their members — especially the female ones — to pursue a career in cabaret or on the big screen; earlier even the theatre itself was suspicious. Consequently, a stage pseudonym helped protect “the good name” of a family. The actress Helena Modrzejewska had to promise to her future in-laws before marrying Karol Chłapowski in 1868 that she would not be using the surname *Chłapowski* on stage (Pycka, 2011, pp. 215–216). Nora Ney is said to have run away from her family home through a window in 1925 to become an actress, since her Jewish family would not let her pursue acting.<sup>14</sup> The reason why the aristocrat Stanisław Józef ks. Gedyminowicz-Bielski chose for himself an artistic pseudonym *Harry Cort*<sup>15</sup> may have been similar: although exciting, acting in films was not considered a suitable activity for the blue-blooded.

Another reason for the assumption of pseudonyms was the fact that quite many actors, conversely, were of humble origins (which may have been reflected in their real names), therefore assuming a fancy stage name helped them hide this fact. Young girls from hard-up families used to be sent to ballet schools not in the hope of a professional career but of finding a wealthy husband, or at

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<sup>13</sup> *Mecenas Lena Barska*. The first episode was shown in Nov. 2017 by the private Polish station TV4.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.naszahistoria.pl/mala-ojczyzna/a/by-zostac-aktorka-nora-ney-uciekla-z-domu,9710354> (accessed Jan. 4, 2018). According to another account, in that way she escaped an arranged marriage with a much older, wealthy man (cf. Rogowski, 2017, p. 143).

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.goodreads.com/author\\_blog\\_posts/8073812-postcards-from-poland](https://www.goodreads.com/author_blog_posts/8073812-postcards-from-poland) (accessed Jan. 6, 2018).

least a gentleman friend who would support them financially. Thus ballet dancing equalled social advancement (Koper, 2015, pp. 132–133).

Many hoped that an exotic-sounding name would help them achieve fame not only in Poland but also abroad. This hope was not totally unfounded: as Pieńkowski (2017, pp. 61–63) points out, at the beginning of the sound era in film-making it was quite common to produce several language versions of the same movie, shot with the same actors and in the same decorations. In the later stage of film history the same decorations were used successively by national film crews for various language versions of the same plot. Still, the pretentiousness of foreign-sounding pseudonyms was an object of criticism: “Our film actresses follow in the footsteps of Hollywood stars [...]. We don’t have such famous stars as Mary Pickford or Greta Garbo. But we have such ones who in order to be more charming (most of all to themselves) assume non-Polish surnames”, the press commented.<sup>16</sup> Even the readers sending their photos to the editors of the periodical “Kino”, in the hope of getting noticed, frequently assumed Western-sounding pseudonyms or at least translated their given names into English or French (cf. Pieńkowski, 2017, pp. 32–33).

In terms of foreign-sounding monikers, it may have happened that an Italian-sounding name was indeed Italian (cf. Carlotta Bologna,<sup>17</sup> the Belgian-born Italian actress, painter and journalist). However, more often it was merely a fancy stage name: *Conti* < *Kozikowski*, *Petri* < *Pietrakiewicz*, *Carnero* < *Kujawska*, or *Martini* < *Mikołajczyk* (from the artist’s mother’s maiden name Martyniak).

Some artists went to great lengths to conceal their real names completely. Actress Monika<sup>18</sup> Carlo, for instance, used to maintain that *Carlo* was indeed her birth surname, even though she freely admitted that she was born to a rather impoverished peasant family in a small village<sup>19</sup>. Another stage celebrity, Nora Ney, born as Sonia Najman into a large Jewish family in north-eastern Poland, did her best to conceal her roots. If pressured by journalists, she either refused to reveal any personal information, such as date and place of birth or birth name, or used to give the made-up name Eleonora (Rogowski, 2017, p. 140). In fact, the list of artists who in artistic life used rather fancy names, which in all likelihood may have been invented pseudonyms, is long: *Ari Arkadi*, *Mary Alma*, *Filip Ende*, *Ina*

<sup>16</sup> Quoted after Rogowski 2017, pp. 179–180; own translation.

<sup>17</sup> *Przekrój*, 1972, nr 7, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> She also used the exoticised spelling *Monica*.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Kino* 43/1933, p. 10. She does not reveal the year or the exact place of her birth, which actually took place in 1912 in Splawie near Konin. Considering that the given name Monika might also have been assumed later in life, it is not easy to establish her real birth surname or given name, even knowing the place and the year of her birth. The fact that *Monika Carlo* was a pseudonym was confirmed by Radzyńska (1998, p. 341).



*Adrian, Ira Ari, Nina Olida, Dela Lipińska, Aleksander Fortunato (Fortunatto?), Karol Dorwski (aka Karol Diamant), Monika (Monica) Carlo, Brygida Helm, Lala Górska, Maria Merita, Henio Francesco, Roma Glan, Mura Starkówna (aka Mura Dan), Iwon(k)a de Petry, Iza Bellina, Ada Owidzka, Zuzanna Karin, Bożena Alesso, Lunia Nestor, Maryla Gremo, Monika Veran, Vera Bobrowska, Rita Lorma.* If these were indeed stage names, as may be surmised, it would be difficult to establish the corresponding real names today.<sup>20</sup>

Sometimes, however, the assumption of a pseudonym was official business. “By the decision of the Board of 29.01. and 14.02.1935, it has been decided [...] to confirm the change of the pseudonym Żeno, hitherto used by colleague Krawczyk Jan, to Giovanello”, read the announcement in a trade periodical in the summer of 1937.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in many cases the invented stage names became for their bearers real surnames (so as to appear in telephone directories, for example) and were even passed onto the artist’s offspring (in the case of men — also onto their wives). This was the case with Mieczysław Fogg (birth name *Fogiel*), Stanisław Belski (*Blaufuks*), Bolesław Franciszek Horski (*Bąbczyński*), Feliks Parnell (*Grzybek*), Teodor Aleksander Roland (*Konopka*), Aleksander Ford (*Mosze Lifszyc*), Ludwik Solski (*Sosnowski*) and many others. Sometimes the artists’ children hyphenated their birth surnames with their fathers’ stage names; in that way the children of Józef Orwid, real surname *Kotschy*, assumed the surname *Kotschy-Orwid*.

Many given names used on stage were inspired by the artists’ birth given names but tailored to sound shorter and more catchy (while their surnames may have been changed as well or left intact): *Apolonia* > *Pola*; *Emilia* > *Mila*; *Helena* > *Ena*, *Lena*; *Jadwiga* > *Jaga*; *Janina* > *Ina*; *Józefina/Józefa* > *Ziuta*, *Zizi*; *Liliana* > *Lili*; *Leokadia* > *Loda* (2 actresses); *Maria* > *Mura*; *Marianna* > *Mira*; *Natalia* > *Nata*; *Olimpia* > *Ola*; *Regina* > *Rena*; *Teodora* > *Tola*; *Zofia* > *Zula*, *Zorika*. Certain changes were more or less arbitrary: *Alicja* > *Punia*, *Józefa* > *Niuta*, *Eugenia* > *Żenia*. However, it should be borne in mind that some diminutives, which sound rather unusual to a Polish ear today, were probably quite common before World War 2. On the basis of various family recollections,<sup>22</sup> the following diminutives, popular before World War 2 but are rather seldom used today, can be invoked: *Dzidka* < *Zdzisława*, *Irena*; *Lencia* < *Eleonora*; *Siuńcia*, *Nina*, *Nusia* < *Janina*; *Wicia* < *Wiktoria*; *Dziuta* < *Jadwiga*; *Dusia* < *Magdalena*; *Lunia*, *Lusia* < *Helena*; *Mania* < *Maria*; *Rela* < *Aurelia*. What is more, some of the given names from which they are derived are equally unusual nowadays

<sup>20</sup> The same observation — about the muddle of the artists’ pseudonyms and cryptonyms — has been made in reference to the times of World War 2 by Mościcki (2012, p. 39).

<sup>21</sup> Echo Artystyczne. Own translation.

<sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/MSmolanska/status/940130446456836096> (accessed Jan. 2, 2018).

because of their rarity (e.g. Leokadia, Teodora, Regina). Literary onomastics provides further examples of unusual pre-war female given names, probably diminutive: *Zunia, Nira, Mika, Tunka*.<sup>23</sup>

It seems more frequent for women than men to modify their given names in this way, but examples of shortened male names can also be given: *Ziemiomysł* [!] > *Ziem, Janusz* > *Jan, Adolf* > *Dodek, Leopold* > *Lo*. Just as in the case of women, some changes seem completely arbitrary: *Karol* > *Igo*. In some cases, the names of both men and women were anglicized or otherwise exoticised: *Dorota* > *Dolly; Maria* > *Mary, Margot; Wiktoria* > *Vittoria; Daniel* > *Danny*.

Considering the inability to arrive at relevant bulk data (due to the conscious concealment by the artists of their birth names), the analyzed sample is not, and can probably never be, representative. Therefore drawing any statistical conclusions should be limited to an absolute minimum. However, the following trends may be outlined in lieu of conclusion:

— stage names different from official ones were extremely common in the interwar Poland;

— they were usually styled to look like real names (mononyms were rare);

— in many cases the initial part of the original name was retained in the stage name: *Leopold Blumental* > *Leo Belmont, Martyniak* > *Martini*;

— their function tended to be twofold: on the one hand, the detachment from real identity (including family origin), on the other — creating the impression that film or stage stars are special, different from ordinary mortals, therefore even their names are special;

— in the case of official names of visibly Polish origin, stage names were frequently obtained by exoticization to make them sound Italian, English or nondescriptly foreign (*Wiktoria Kotulak* > *Vittoria Calma*), whereas in the case of ostensibly Jewish names (which were mostly artificial German-based coinages) the typical trend was towards domestication to Polish-sounding names (*Nierensztajn* > *Nireńska*); especially in the latter respect Poland did not markedly differ from other countries of the time, including the USA (Hollywood), where changing names from Jewish-sounding to native-sounding ones was frequent among performing artists;

— in some cases, especially as regards female artists, it is possible to identify the “archetypal stage name”, with a diminutive-sounding given name composed of two open syllables (*Tola, Dela, Rita, Ari*) and a short *-ski/-ska*-ending surname (*Delska, Koski*).

<sup>23</sup> All these are names of characters from the novels “Dr. Murek zredukowany” and “Drugie życie doktora Murka” by Tadeusz Dołęga-Mostowicz, both published in 1936. The name *Tunia* also appears in “Panny z Wilka” by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (1933).

## The list of stage and real names

1. Adolfi, Hipolit (Adolf Hipolit Steibelt)
2. Alber, Jerzy (Jerzy Tadeusz Siemieniak)
3. Ankwicz, Krystyna (Krystyna Szyjkowska)
4. Aston, Adam (Adolf Loewinsohn)
5. Barwiński, Henryk (Henryk Teodor Hertz)
6. Belerina/Belleryna, Bela (Bela Rubinlikht/Rubinlicht)
7. Belina, Anna (Izydora Jackowska, 1<sup>st</sup> married n. Leszczyńska, née Schiller de Schildenfeld)
8. Bellari-Czystogórska, Helena (Helena Reinberg)
9. Belmont, Leo (Leopold Blumental)
10. Belski, Stanisław (Stanisław Blaufuks)
11. Benda, Karol (Karol Spitzbarth)
12. Benita, Ina (Janina Ferow-Buľhak)
13. Bodo, Eugeniusz (Bohdan Eugène Junod)
14. Bogda, Maria (Janina Brodzisz, née Kopaczek)
15. Boleśławski, Ryszard (Ryszard Srzednicki)
16. Bolska, Niuta (Józefa Olesińska, Bakiel, Zdanowicz)
17. Bończa, Rafaela (Rafaela Skórewicz, née Rutkowska)
18. Boryta, Jaga (Jadwiga Nowakowska)
19. Breza, Tom (Tomasz [?] Brzeziński)
20. Broniszówna, Seweryna (Seweryna Chwat)
21. Buczyńska, Ziuta (Józefa Buczyńska, née Wołosz)
22. Calma, Vittoria (Wiktoria Kotulak)
23. Carnero, Irena (Irena Kujawska)
24. Chaveau, Maria (Maria Chawowa)
25. Conti, Witold (Witold Konrad Maksymilian Kozikowski)
26. Cort, Harry (Stanisław Józef Gedyminowicz-Bielski, Henryk Bielski [?])
27. Csaki/Czaki Jadwiga (Józefa Pelagia Jadwiga Mirecka, née Cieślińska)
28. Cybulski, Gustaw Grzegorz (Gustaw Grzegorz Cybulka)
29. Czachurska, Lidia (Elżbieta Pelagia Kowalewska, née Herszaft)
30. Ćwiklińska, Mieczysława (Mieczysława Trapszo)
31. Dal-Atan, Jerzy (Gieorgij Aleksandrowicz Tiesławski)
32. Dalma, Irena (Janina Irena Łukaszewicz)
33. Dan, Władysław (Władysław Daniłowski)
34. d'Ar, Mary (Maria Grzejdziak)
35. de Witt, Monika (Krystyna Szyjkowska)
36. Delska, Zofia (Zofia Pindelska-Burzyńska)
37. Ditrís, Luba (Luba Fischer)

38. Dromlewiczowa, Zofia (Zofia Higier)
39. Dymsza, Adolf (Adolf Bagiński) — aka Dodek
40. Erwest(ówna), Ida (Ida Ajerwajs)
41. Erwicz, Ewa (Zofia Zielińska)
42. Fogg, Mieczysław (Mieczysław Fogiel)
43. Ford, Aleksander (Mosze Lifszyc)
44. Fotygo, Bolesław (Bolesław Folański)
45. Frankowska, Elza (Elza Fränkel)
46. Friedler, Dolly (Dorota Friedler)
47. Gardan, Juliusz (Juliusz Gradstein)
48. Gawlikowski, Wiesław (Ludwik Pacholski)
49. Góraska, Stefania/Stefcia (Stefania Zadrozińska)
50. Gran, Wiera (Weronika/Dwojra Grynberg)
51. Gray, Gilda (Marianna/Maria Michalska)
52. Green, Sylvia (Weronika/Dwojra Grynberg)
53. Grolicki, Stanisław (Stanisław Grolich)
54. Gruszecka, Helena (Helena Detke, née Birnbaum)
55. Grywiczówna, Irena (Irena Kopczyńska, first marriage n. Stankiewicz, née  
Nikołajewicz)
56. Gucki, Stefan (Stefan Gulanicki)
57. Halama, Ena (Helena Halama)
58. Halama, Loda (Leokadia Halama)
59. Halama, Punia (Alicja Halama)
60. Halama, Zizi (Józefa/Józefina Halama)
61. Halicz, Michał (Leopold Blomberg)
62. Halska, Alina (Priva Krakauer)
63. Harris, Albert (Aaron Hekelman)
64. Henry, Henia (Henryka Banówna)
65. Holm, Albert (Aaron Hekelman)
66. Horecka, Irena (Irena Loevy, née Hones)
67. Horski, Bolesław Franciszek (Bolesław Franciszek Bąbczyński)
68. Horwath, Irena (Władysława Zofia Kurzyjamska)
69. Hryniewiczówna, Rena (Regina Hryniewiczówna)
70. Janecka, Jagna (Agnieszka Dobrzyńska, Janina's daughter)
71. Janecka, Janina (Janina Dobrzyńska)
72. Janecka, Maria (Maria Dobrzyńska, Janina's daughter)
73. Janusz, Jan (Janusz Pik)
74. Jaroń, Janusz (Janusz Machowski)
75. Juno, Jaga (Jadwiga Galewska, second marriage n. Stępowska, née Kossówna)
76. Junosza, Kazimierz (Kazimierz Stępowski)

77. Jurandot, Jerzy (Jerzy Gleichgewicht)
78. Kaden, Danny (Daniel Kirschenfinkel)
79. Kaftal, Margot (Maria Kaftal)
80. Kajdarowa, Tila (Tila Rapaport)
81. Kalinowska, Mura (Maria Kalinowska-Górnik, née Wójcicka)
82. Kalinówna, Dora (Dora Ratner, née Klingbeil)
83. Kamińska, Mila (Emilia Kamińska)
84. Kański, Tadeusz (Tadeusz Drohomirecki)
85. Kar, Alma (Lidia Pickard<sup>24</sup>, married n. probably Szymonowicz)
86. Karewicz, Andrzej (Zbigniew Drzymuchowski)
87. Karliński, Karol (Karol Knake-Zawadzki)
88. Kenda, Jadwiga (Jadwiga Kędziora)
89. Kittay, Lo (Leopold Mieczysław Kittay)
90. Kleszczówna, Freda (Alfreda Koch, née Kleszcz)
91. Korczyńska, Iga (Jadwiga Wielgus)
92. Korska, Maria (Maria Konarek, née Apatow)
93. Krzewiński, Julian (Julian Piotr Maszyński)
94. Ladis, Władysław (Władysław Kiepusza)
95. Larys, Lili (Helena Maliszewska-Płaczkiewicz, first marriage n. Osmólska)
96. Lawiński, Ludwik (Ludwik Latajner)
97. Lee, Gwen (Gwinona Lipińska)
98. Lerska, Nata (Natalia Kowalska, married n. Sztatler)
99. Ley, Lidia (Lidia Tertilowa)
100. Liana/Lyana, Lili (Stanisława Alicja Zielińska)<sup>25</sup>
101. Liff, Albert (Aaron Hekelman)
102. Liliana, Lily/Lili (Liliana Liebgold)
103. Lisowska (aka Lysówna, Lysowska), Olga (Olga Felicja Dołżycka, née Dul)
104. Lubicz-Sarnowska, Stanisława (Stanisława Muhsam, née Sarnowska)
105. Ludwikowski, Ludwik (Ludwik Halski)
106. Magierówna, Żenia (Eugenia Magierówna)
107. Man(n)/Mannówna Franciszka (Franciszka Rosenberg, née Manheimer)
108. Mankiewiczówna, Tola (Teodora Raabe, née Oleksa)
109. Mara, Lya (Aleksandra Gudowiczówna)
110. Marcello/Marczello, Helena (Helena Palińska, née Chraszczewska)
111. Mariański, Marian (Marian Knake-Zawadzki)
112. Marr, Jerzy (Oktawian Zawadzki)

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<sup>24</sup> Considering the fact that she was born in Russia, her birth surname, even if invoked in sources, sounds unusual.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.jura-pilica.com/biuletyny/Aerofilm.pdf> (accessed Jan. 4, 2018).

113. Marten, Aleksander (Marek Tennenbaum)
114. Martini, Janina (Janina Mikołajczyk)
115. May, Niusia (Maria Kramarz)
116. Mayflauer, Zygfryd (Ryszard Zygfryd Mayblum)
117. Messal, Lucyna (Lucyna Mischal-Sztukowska) — aka Messalka
118. Milecki, Mieczysław (Mieczysław Loretz)
119. Minowicz, Edmund (Edmund Pitzele)
120. Mińska, Olga (Janina Wieczerzyńska, née Billewicz, second marriage n. Ford — Aleksander Ford's wife)
121. Mirska-Zarembina, Maria (Maria Szuster, née Juszcakiewicz — Józef Zaremba's wife)
122. Mirska, Maria (Maria Kicińska, née Laskowska)
123. Mirska, Marta (Alicja Nowak-Reiniger)
124. Modrzewski, Henryk (Henryk Zasacki)
125. Montti, Senti (Zojja Olszewska)
126. Morelli, Lena (Maria Apfelbaum)
127. Morska, Maria (Maria Frankiel-Knastrowa)
128. Mrozińska, Mary (Maria Mrozińska, married n. Trzaska-Durska<sup>26</sup>)
129. Negri, Pola (Apolonia Chałupiec<sup>27</sup>)
130. Ney, Ina (Cecylia Jadwiga Ostoja-Starzecka)
131. Ney, Jerzy (Jerzy Karkowski)
132. Ney, Nora (Sonia Nejman/Zofia Neuman)
133. Ney, Sława (Sława Sikorska)
134. Niemirzanka, Loda (Leokadia Niemirzanka, Leokadia Niemira)
135. Niovilla, Nina (Nina Petekiewicz)
136. Nireńska, Pola (Pola Nierensztajn)
137. Nova, Eva (Irena Mokry-Nowicka)
138. Nowicka, Lili (Róża Uszerowicz)
139. Obarska, Ola (Olimpia Obarska-Forkasiewicz)
140. Olska, Maria (Maria Pilarska, née Goebel)
141. Olsza, Tadeusz (Tadeusz Blomberg)
142. Ordey, Tadeusz (Tadeusz Małuszyński)
143. Ordonówna, Hanka (Maria Anna Tyszkiewicz, née Pietruszyńska)
144. Ordyńska, Zofia (Zofia Pindelska-Burzyńska)
145. Ordyński, Ryszard (Dawid Blumenfeld)
146. Orleńska, Olga (Olga Felicja Dołżycka, née Dul)

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<sup>26</sup> Contrary to most sources, and according to the inscription on her grave in Warsaw, *Mary Mrozińska* was a stage name, while her real surname was *Maria Durska* née *Trzaska*.

<sup>27</sup> Or *Chalupec*, since her father was of Slovak ethnicity.

147. Orska, Stanisława (Stanisława Kowalczyk, née Oporska)
148. Orwid, Barbara/Baśka (Barbara Zawadzka — Jerzy Marr's stepsister)
149. Orwid, Józef (Józef Kotschy)
150. Owron, Lech/Leszek (Lech Przyłuski)
151. Parnell, Feliks (Feliks Jan Grzybek)
152. Petri, Vera (Wiera Pietrakiewicz)
153. Pogorzelska, Zula (Zofia Pogorzelska)
154. Pokrzywińska-Pawlak, Stella (Stefania Pawlak, née Pokrzywa)
155. Poleński, Adolf Stanisław (Stanisław Adolf Krautenfeld)
156. Rambert, Marie (Cywia/Miriam Ramberg/Rambam)
157. Rand, Lola (Helena Kitajewicz/Kitajowa)
158. Reć, Halina (Helena Hadyk)
159. Ref-Ren (Feliks Stanisław Konarski)
160. Renard, Irena (Irena Leszczyńska, née Zyman, first marriage n. Kleinadel, second marriage n. Zaleska)
161. Renówna, Irena (Irena Wasilewska)
162. Reri (Anna Irma Ruahrei Chevalier)
163. Roland, Teodor Aleksander (Aleksander Konopka)
164. Roy, Rolf (Max Klein)
165. Runowiecki, Konrad (Konrad Kusewitzky) — aka Tim-Tom
166. Sari, Ada (Jadwiga Szayer)
167. Sawan, Zbigniew/Zbyszko (Zbigniew Nowakowski)
168. Sielański, Stanisław (Stanisław Nasielski)
169. Slavia, Ellen (Elfriede Schlicht)
170. Sławska, Olga (Olga Lipczyńska, née Prorubnikow)
171. Solski, Ludwik (Ludwik Napoleon Sosnowski)
172. Srebrzycki Janusz (Janusz Zilberman/Bilberstein)
173. Stanisławski, Stanisław (Stanisław Bratman)
174. Starska, Halina (Helena Starkiewicz)
175. Starski, Ludwik (Ludwik Kałuszyner)
176. Starski, Ziem (Ziemiomysł Marian Starkiewicz)
177. Sulimowa/Sulima Helena (Helena Stanisława Gottowt)
178. Sym, Igo (Karol Antoni Juliusz Sym)
179. Szalawski, Andrzej (Andrzej Pluciński)
180. Szaro, Henryk (Henocho Szapiro)
181. Szymańska, Zorika (Zofia Szymańska)
182. Talajner, Kiwdul (Ludwik Latajner)
183. Tawicz, Tadeusz (Tadeusz Bogdanowicz)
184. Terné, Zofia (Wiera Chajter)
185. Tom, Konrad (Konrad Kusewitzky) — aka Tim-Tom

186. Trystan, Leon (Chaim Lejb Wagman)
187. Vorbond, Wanda (Wanda Dąbrowska)
188. Walter, Władysław (Władysław Walterejt)
189. Waszyński, Michał (Mosze Waks)
190. Wilamowski, Kazimierz (Kazimierz Antoni Knobelsdorf)
191. Wilczówna, Janina (Janina Sławik, née Wilcher)
192. Will, Marietta (Maria Humnicka)
193. Wiński, Adam (Adolf Loewinsohn)
194. Wiszniewska, Mira (Tamara Wiszniewska)
195. Wojdan, Antoni (Antoni Cwojdziniński)
196. Wojtecki, Wojciech (Wojciech Wasilewski)
197. Wrącki/Wroncki Stefan (Stefan Majkowski)
198. Wyrwicz, Leon (Leon Haraschin)
199. Zahorska, Helena (Helena Ziółkowska)
200. Zaremba, Józef (Józef Szuster)
201. Zenita, Mia (Maria Bilka)
202. Zimińska-Sygietyńska, Mira (Marianna Zimińska-Sygietyńska)
203. Znicz, Michał (Michał Feiertag)
204. Żelichowska, Lena (Helena Żelichowska)
205. Żeliska, Alina (Alina Piędzicka, née Hawryszko)
206. Żelska, Maria (Marcjanna Zgorzelska)

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#### SUMMARY

Many performing artists in the interwar period in Poland assumed stage names, which were considered a tool of promoting one's image, but also served other functions, such as the concealment of identity. Over two hundred such pseudonyms — together with the respective artists' birth names — have been collected and analysed in the article. Approximately in the case of half of them was the original given name retained, and only the surname underwent a change. The comparison of the assumed names with the real ones shows that many names were shortened, and/or made to sound foreign or exotic. Minority surnames — Jewish/German, Russian, Ukrainian — were frequently made to sound Polish, while the Polish ones were foreignised (to make them look English, Italian, French) or vaguely exoticised.

