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Bear Pit audiences are treated to the Polish classic - The Morality of Mrs Dulska



Jacque Campbell as Mrs Dulska. Photo by Adam Demkow Photography.

The Morality of Mrs Dulska, written by Gabriela Zapolska, translated by Teresa Murjao, producer Magda Dylag Copernicana CIC, directed by Danny Masewicz. At the Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon from 8 – 11 July 2026.
Review by Ann Evans

It's been 120 years since this play premiered in Poland. The year was 1906 and had been written by Gabriela Zapolska (1857-1921) who is regarded as one of Poland's most brilliant playwrights and a fearless voice for social reform.

The story takes place over one day, in the home of the wealthy Dulska family in Krakow, Poland. Aniela Dulska is by far the head of the household, ruling the home in an overbearing, tyrannical manner with her husband Felician seeming to have totally given up trying to get a word in edgeways, and only comes to life when he's let out for walks. Jacque Campbell plays the role of Mrs Dulska brilliantly, especially when she loses her composure and absolutely bellows out her demands on the family.



Alicja Trełowska and Iwona Zielona Refling (Hanka) enjoying rehearsals. Photo by Adam Demkow Photography.

The play is a satirical comedy looking at the hypocrisy of displaying the facade of perfect morality and respectability for the outside world while behind closed doors Mrs Dulska is exploiting her tenants, domineering her family and servant – and now all hell is breaking loose with a scandal about to be made public.

The maid, Hanka, played by Iwona Zielona Refling, a tragic, sad-looking young woman is pregnant by the son of the house, Zbyszko. Justin Osborne takes on this role with a brash confidence – but to give him his due, Zbyszko says he will marry Hanka. Unfortunately, his mother has other ideas – she can't bear the shame of having a servant as a daughter in law, and piles on the pressure until Zbyszko changes his mind.



Alice Edwards as Mela. Photo by Adam Demkow Photography.

There are two teenage daughters, Hesja, a confident 15-year-old, who glides, dances and poses her way through life, at the same time portraying some of her mother's traits. Joanna Stevely plays this role excellently. Mela is 14 years old and is the complete opposite of her sister. Delightfully played by Alice Edwards, she's sweet, kind and incredibly innocent, making for a very funny scene when she gullibly thinks she understands why the maid Hanka is so distraught - only she doesn't!

The other roles in the play included Mrs Dulska's upstairs tenant played by Lynda Liddament, Juliasiewiczowa – a relative played by Ania Bhatia and Mrs Tadrachowa, Hanka's Godmother, played by Sheena Ison. Each cast member giving an excellent performance.



Joanna Stevely as Hesja. Photo by Adam Demkow Photography.

It was good acting throughout this production, with each of the actors really bringing their characters to life, and there was plenty of humour throughout the production raising laughter in all the right places!

Because of the hot weather, the team put two intervals in place, giving the audience a chance to top up their cold drinks and get an ice cream.

As a classic Polish play, lots have been written about the themes that this deals with. For example it's renowned for highlighting major issues such as the bourgeois mentality and hypocrisy of keeping up the façade of decency and morality to the outside world while behaving in quite opposite ways behind closed doors. In fact they even have a word to represent this based on the main character's name – Dulska-ness!

The talented cast put on an excellent production and well deserved the rousing applause and shouts of 'Bravo!' at the finale. An altogether very enjoyable satirical comedy that is definitely worth seeing. And even though it was written 120 years ago, it is still very relevant in today's society.

The Morality of Mrs Dulska runs at The Bear Pit Theatre, Stratford upon Avon, until 11 July. Start time 7:30pm plus a matinee at 2:30pm on Sat 11 July. Tickets available here: <https://www.thebearpit.org.uk/> or call 0333 666 3366.

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