

All Polish collector coins feature:

- face value
- image of the Eagle established as the state emblem of the Republic of Poland
- inscription: Rzeczpospolita Polska
- year of issue



Issuing collector items is an occasion to commemorate important historic figures and anniversaries, as well as to develop the interest of the public in Polish culture, science and tradition.

Information on the issue schedule can be found at the www.nbp.pl/monety website.

Should you have any questions, please contact our consultants at the following phone numbers: +48 22 185 91 59 and +48 22 185 13 03.

Collector coins issued by NBP are sold at NBP regional branches and in the NBP online shop.

On 21 October 2021, Narodowy Bank Polski will be putting into circulation a silver commemorative coin “30th Anniversary of the First Free Parliamentary Election”, with a face value of 10 złoty.

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Narodowy Bank Polski

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NARODOWY
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Great Actresses

Gabriela Zapolska



Collector coins

Great Actresses – Gabriela Zapolska

On 14 October 2021, Narodowy Bank Polski is putting into circulation a silver coin of the series “Great Actresses” – Gabriela Zapolska, with a face value of 20 złoty.

Gabriela Zapolska, (née Maria Gabriela Stefania Korwin-Piotrowska, (first married name Śnieżko-Błocka and second married name Janowska). She was born in Podhajce on 30 March 1857 and died in Lviv on 21 December 1921. Active as an actress, stage director, theatre manager, writer, and columnist, she was one of the most distinctive representatives of Polish culture of the late 19th and early 20th century and is considered to be the most accomplished Polish playwright of her time.

She came from a moderately affluent family of landed gentry. At the age of 19, she was married off to Konstanty Śnieżko-Błocki who was an officer in the Tsarist army. The unhappy marriage was short-lived and left a deep mark in Zapolska’s psyche. In 1881, she made her literary debut by publishing the short story *Jeden dzień z życia róży* in the newspaper “Gazeta Krakowska”. From November 1879 to April 1880, she performed on stage in the amateur theatre of the Warsaw Philanthropic Society (Warszawskie Towarzystwo Dobroczyńności) under the name Gabriela Śnieżko. After separating from her husband, she started using the artistic pseudonym of Gabriela Zapolska. In 1882, she made her professional stage debut at the Kraków theatre (currently the Helena Modrzejewska National Stary Theatre in Kraków) in the small role of Margot in Kazimierz Zalewski’s comedy *Spudłowali*. From 1882 to 1889, she performed in provincial theatres, as well as at the theatres in Lviv and Poznań. In Kraków, she made a guest appearance in the role of Nora, the eponymous character in Henrik Ibsen’s play (1889). She unsuccessfully sought employment at the Warsaw Theatre Directorate (Warszawskie Teatry Rządowe). Despite Zapolska’s literary success, the continued setbacks in her personal life and acting career led the artist to a nervous breakdown concluded with an unsuccessful suicide attempt.



In the years 1889-1895, Zapolska lived in Paris, where she studied the art of acting and performed at André Antoine’s famous Théâtre Libre and, occasionally, at the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre. While she did not achieve success in France, she learned a lot from her stay abroad. Zapolska became fascinated with the innovative trends of naturalism and psychologism in the European theatre, as well as the realistic acting style. She drew from this experience in her later professional life.

After returning to her homeland, Zapolska went back to performing in the provinces. However, already in 1897, theatre manager Tadeusz Pawlikowski engaged her to join one of the best Polish theatrical groups – the Municipal Theatre in Kraków (currently the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Kraków). Pawlikowski was appreciative of Zapolska’s acting skills as well as her literary talents. He successfully staged her well-crafted, bold dramas portraying the lives of the poorest members of society, the Jewish community (*Jojne Firulkes, Małka Szwarcenkopff*), as well as the bourgeoisie, which was depicted by Zapolska in a highly critical manner (*Dziewiczy wieczór, Żabusia*). Moreover, the plays presented on the stage of the Municipal Theatre also included politically engaged dramas such as *Sybir* and *Tamten*, which related to the developments taking place at the time. Due to fear of reprisals on the part of the partitioning powers, the latter work was written under the pseudonym Józef Maskoff.

Face value: 20 zł

Metal: 925/1000

Finish: **proof, UV printing**

Dimensions: 40.00 × 28.00 mm

Weight: 28.28 g

Edge (side): **plain**

Mintage: up to 10,000 pcs



Designer: Dominika Karpińska-Kopiec

Issuer: NBP

The coins, commissioned by NBP, were struck by Mennica Polska S.A.

In 1899, Zapolska moved to her hometown of Lviv and from that point on she primarily devoted herself to writing. In 1901, she married the painter Stanisław Janowski and once again moved to Kraków. She founded a private acting school and the innovative Independent Theatre (Scena Niezależna), which was modelled on Antoine’s theatre. She returned to Lviv in 1904, and in the years 1907-1908 led her own theatre there. Her novels, short stories, and stage plays enjoyed widespread popularity, and the tetralogy of stage plays consisting of the dramas *Żabusia, Ich czworo* (Four of Them), *Skiz* (The Secret of Skiz) and *Moralność pani Dulskiej* (The Morality of Mrs Dulska) belongs to the canon of Polish drama. Because of these works, Zapolska is frequently referred to as a feminist. Although she rejected such characterisations herself, her work represents one of the most courageous and incisive approaches towards women’s issues and social issues in all of Polish literature.

Diana Poskuta-Włodek

The reverse side of the coin carries a portrait of Gabriela Zapolska, while the obverse features the performance hall of the Juliusz Słowacki Theatre in Kraków.