

Szín – játék – költészet

Tanulmányok a nyolcvanéves Kilián István tiszteletére

Szerkesztette

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Partium Kiadó – Protea Egyesület – *reciti*

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*The Art of Fire in Open-Air Spectacles
in Eighteenth-Century Poland*

The Enlightenment, known as the Age of Light, is a period in which the element of fire was tamed, and in which that element was, at times, given shape and used for artistic ends. In the eighteenth century the pyrotechnic art parted company with the handicraft of the munitions maker, and became the domain of masters of the art of fireworks. It is they who developed fire's theatrical potential.

Among the most celebrated of such masters was Amédée Frézier. His handbook on the art fireworks was published, with numerous supplements, in Poland (in Polish translation) in 1803.¹ The handbook had been read earlier in the French original. It had also been used by firework makers visiting Poland from Western Europe (for example, the Frenchman Jean Fabri, and the Italian J.A. Machio). These had called their pyrotechnic spectacles a theatre of jocund fire, of artistic fire. We can divide spectacles in the theatre of jocund fire as follows: **fire-based spectacles**, **dramatic firework displays**, **pyrotechnic displays** and **celebratory illuminations**. There are also examples of the bringing together of two or more of the above forms.

Our knowledge of these spectacles in Poland is based on the programmes from firework shows, leaflets, press accounts, letters, posters, etchings, pictures, and bills. The material that has survived is extensive. Here it will be presented only through selected examples.

Fire-based spectacles belong to the category of occasional theatre, celebrating events important for the community as a whole. Introduced into celebration and festival, they achieve a certain theatricalization of festive life.² According to the principle of *decorum*, it was deemed appropriate to use light and artistically configured fire to embellish important festivals that had a national dimension, and ceremonies linked to important persons. These were marked by being repeated annually (a fusion of fire and drama, illuminations); they also often involved celebrations that lasted several days.

The material that has survived from the time of King Stanisław August mainly documents fire-based spectacles incorporated in the conduct of festivals connected with state events and the person of the King. The first festival celebrated in this manner was the

¹ *O ogniach ochotnych czyli nauka robienia fajerwerku zebrana z różnych autorów, szczególnie z dzieła P. [sic] Frezier. Przekładanie z francuskiego z figurami w ośmiu tablicach zawartymi*, Wilno, Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Wileńskiego, 1803.

² Ch. BALME, *Wprowadzenie do nauki o teatrze*, transl. W. DUDZIK and M. LEYKO, *Nowoczesna Myśl Teatralna*, ed. D. RATAJCAKOWA, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo PWN, 2002.

coronation itself and the period of coronation celebrations. Subsequently, celebrations marked the anniversaries of the beginning and the conclusion of the King's election, and the King's name days, these last being linked with celebrations commemorating the creation of the Order of Saint Stanislaw.³ From 1791, May became a month of celebrations in honour of the Law of April and the Constitution of 3 May.⁴

Among celebrations that were important for individual localities were royal visits. However it was Stanisław August himself who gave a particular significance to the festivity of the unveiling of a monument to King Jan III Sobieski.⁵ These celebrations shaped how festivals in general were conducted; they aimed to unite Poles with their ruler.

A group of festivals of a more limited scope, which were distinguished by spectacles, included celebrations connected with persons of importance within the state, their assumption of state offices, marriages, name days, and receptions of important guests. However, it did also happen that those to whom such splendid displays were dedicated avoided the elaborate ceremonies that it was their duty to attend.

The importance of the celebration was also determined by the geographical scope of the celebrations and the firework displays organized during them. Accounts in Warsaw newspapers and those from the country as a whole indicate that one can speak of certain general festivals, particularly in honour of the Constitution of 3 May. Even the smallest Polish localities offered accounts of their celebrations, in this way taking part in a wider national festivity.

These localities were also linked by a repetition of a specific formula of the celebration and the segmentation of the festivity, in which the firework display had a defined place. The day of the festival would begin at dawn with an artillery volley which marked the beginning of the celebration. This type of announcement was derived from the tradition of the art of fireworks.⁶ The recommendation was that there be "a hundred shots from the pieces"; however commentators also note that the salvos often included three hundred shots from several mortars and shots from handpieces too.

Artillery fire would rouse the town and the neighbourhood. The early morning (around four o'clock) would begin a day filled with refulgence and bursts of fire, effects that culminated in evening illumination and night fireworks. This would often last into the morning of the following day. The subsequent stages of the festivity were inscribed within a frame of fire; the whole festivity expressing (as it was written) "respectful wishes for the king," sentiments of gratitude towards the *Sejm* (Parliament) for blessing the common people with the Constitution, and loyalty to the nation. These words would begin press accounts, and, in essence, they fulfil a function close to that of dedications

³ J. JACKI, "Teatr i życie teatralne w gazetach i gazetkach pisanych (1763–1794)." *Teatr Narodowy 1765–1794*, ed. J. KOTT, Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1967, 433–615; J. POKORA, *Obraz Najjaśniejszego Pana Stanisława Augusta (1764–1770). Studium z ikonografii władzy*, Warszawa, Instytut Sztuki PAN, 1993.

⁴ *Gazeta Warszawska*, Warszawa 1791–1792; *Wiadomości Warszawskie*, Warszawa 1791–1792.

⁵ A. NARUSZEWICZ, *Opisanie festynu danego w Łazienkach, rezydencji letniej J. K. Mości z okoliczności inauguracji statui Króla Jana III, dnia 14 września roku 1788*, Warszawa, 1788; L. BERNACKI, *Teatr, dramaty i muzyka za Stanisława Augusta*, vol. 1: *Źródła i materiały*, Lwów, Ossolineum, 1925, 440–461.

⁶ *O ogniach ochotnych*, op. cit., 283–289.

preceding dramatic works. The segments of the celebration are outlined in accounts. There was a gathering of a group of noble and distinguished persons, often together with a military regiment, and the representatives of the town and the common people. Then there would be a procession to church with lighted candles for a sung mass, celebrated with a special sermon and the singing of a *Te Deum*. In towns with a substantial German community, there would be a second sermon in German. For the “Graeco-oriental” faithful the *Te Deum* would be sung in Greek, Latin and Polish.⁷ Then followed a time for calls for long life and best wishes. After this at the Town Hall came the announcement of nominations, promotions, distinctions, and oaths of loyalty to the nation and the King. A solemn ceremony would bring together some of the guests who would raise various appropriate toasts.

In front of the Town Hall or palace, in the evening around eight o'clock, the illuminations would begin. These would be accompanied by the reading of inscriptions, music, singing and the scattering of flowers. Illuminations that lit up buildings and the surroundings lasted till morning; they could also be extended over several days, sometimes for more than a week.⁸

The fire that played a role in all stages and places of the celebration created a space of *sacrum* that enhanced the power of the festival, in which current political events and their evaluation were subject to a process of performance.

The element determining the scope of the open theatre of illumination was the range of the light – the space of illuminated architecture, the range of fire and fireworks. The open-air area that was lit became a theatrical space.

This did not mean that the indoor theatre renounced scenes that used fire effects. In March 1775, in the National Theatre (*Teatr Narodowy*) in the play *Zbieg z miłości ku rodzicom* (Desertion for Love of Parents), instead of a ballet, there was a firework display “faithfully imitating the pyrotechnic arts.” Scenes of flaming radiance, of a naval engagement with the burning vessels of the European fleet indicate the splendour of the staging at the première of Wojciech Bogusławski's *Lanassa* (7 October 1790).⁹ Similar effects, along with the taking of a fortress, were used in the performance of Franciszek Zabłocki's *Arlekin Mahometa* (The Harlequin of Mahomet) (12 February 1792). Hell fires, a sky lit by lightning, seas battles, explosions, fiery figures emitting texts, and illuminated coats of arms etc. were also employed to widespread approval on Jesuit stages, despite the official ban on pyrotechnic displays.¹⁰

Fire-based spectacles had their own dramaturgy, dynamics and sequencing of scenes of fire and light. In every variant it is possible to point to how the action is organized, and to the degree to which it is filled out with occasional contents (wishes, poems, quotations, and mottoes). In a spectacle they constitute the presence of literature, part

⁷ *Gazeta Warszawska*, Warszawa 179, nr 1–150 i Addytament. See: mf BJ Kraków, sygn. 572.

⁸ *Gazeta Warszawska*, op. cit.

⁹ W. BOGUSŁAWSKI, Intr. to *Henryk VI na łowach* = W. BOGUSŁAWSKI, *Dzieła dramatyczne*, vol. 5. Warszawa, 1821.

¹⁰ See: J. POPLATEK, *Studia z dziejów jezuickiego teatru szkolnego w Polsce*, Wrocław, Ossolineum, 1957, 33, 77–78; I. KADULSKA, *Ze studiów nad dramatem jezuickim wczesnego oświecenia (1746–1765)*, Wrocław, Ossolineum, 1974, 42.

of emblematic structures with signal material such as pictures, portraits, coats of arms, decorated initials, insignias of power, statues of pagan gods, and symbols etc.

Dramatic firework displays also reward close examination. Worthy of note is the firework display from August 1754 to commemorate the Name Day of His Excellency The King of Poland August III and, simultaneously, the anniversary of the founding of the Order of the White Eagle. The programme printed before the display set out the theatrical aspects of the celebration, the festive stage design, mottoes, symbols, the plans for seating the king and the court, the spectators, musicians, artillerymen and firework men. The display was divided into three acts. Act I presented various firework pieces: numbers and initials, fiery clusters, balls of fire, mirrors, blazing sheaves, circles, artificial bellows etc. Act II announces a “show of firework pieces which will take place over the river.” The central figure here is the moving, flowing figure of the White eagle, which, “wearing the Royal Crown, beribboned and everywhere glowing with fire, appears in the river and draws near the Royal Tent. Here there can be seen many spurtings of fire, artificial bombs, swarms of bees, blazing columns, fiery balls, a white dew of fire, and various mystic barrels, some filled with white fiery dew, others with various interesting species of fire.”¹¹

The dynamics of the action are indicated by fire effects that accompany the movement of the crowned Eagle to the levée where the centre of the action is, that is the King’s tent. The conclusion of the action (after more “artificial fires” in Act III), the epilogue, is a concert on both sides of the river. The departure of the chief member of the audience, the King, “concludes the spectacle.”

Dramatic firework displays were marked by a high degree of dramatization of events. They could be linked, *inter alia*, to a theatrical reproduction of real sea battles and the realia of military life. In eighteenth-century Europe there was considerable interest in accounts of the French, Spanish and Dutch assaults on Gibraltar from the sea (1781–1782). In the naval attack on the English positions, a range of artillery innovations were employed, including floating batteries.¹² The battle for Gibraltar was related in Europe in magic lantern displays. In Warsaw in 1783, the Italian Machio showed these fiery slides “at homes,” thus becoming one of the early practitioners in the prehistory of the modern film newsreel.¹³

The siege of Gibraltar was also shown in a two-hour spectacle on the lake in Nieświeżkie in September 1784. In this evening performance celebrating the arrival of King Stanisław August, thirty ships in war-like disposition, under full sail and fully manned, attempted to storm the fortress of Gibraltar. The attack of the combined fleet was supported by replicas of famous French artillery batteries. In the finale, the unconquered fortress was illuminated. Historical fact here became the basis for the action of a spectacle, and set out its course. In terms of the means employed in this spectacle,

¹¹ *Opisanie feierwerku [sic], który się odprawi w Warszawie, dnia 3 Augusta w Dzień Imienin Najjaśniejszego Króla Polskiego... w Warszawie 1754.* See: Biblioteki XX Czarotorskich sygn. 59. I. Czasop.

¹² J. KITOWICZ, *Pamiętniki, czyli Historia polska.* Intr. P. Matuszewska, with a commentary by Z. LEWINÓWNA, 2nd ed., Warszawa, Polski Instytut Wydawniczy, 2005, 364–365.

¹³ J. JACKI, *Widowiska popularne w Warszawie w latach 1764–1794. Kronika, „Pamiętnik Teatralny”* 1968 z. 1 (65), s. 78.

“theatre is but theatre,” yet in keeping with the pyrotechnic art, ships and sailors fired real firework charges.¹⁴

We can mention here several other examples of military spectacles on water. Part of the festival organized on the Vistula at Młociny by the King’s esquire August Frederyk Moszyński on the anniversary of the beginning of the Royal Election in August 1765, took the form of an attack by representatives of various nations on an island inhabited by savages. In this spectacle King Poniatowski was transformed from spectator into actor. He sailed to the island, and the worthy savages surrendered to him at the command of their gods, Youth, Cupid and Delight. After this battle of the nations, there was more theatre (the goddesses were played by actresses), ballet, opera and a supper prepared (*nota bene!*) by representatives of the nations and the savages. The banquet became thus a new scene in the evening’s play. At midnight, the opposite bank of the Vistula was illuminated by “costly fireworks.”¹⁵

A theatrical representation of a naval battle was also part of the welcoming of the King to Siedlice in 1783. This welcome lasted several days and consisted of many elements. On the fourth day of his visit (23 July) “there was viewed an attack on a fortress outside the city, raised up in a field, and fortified with towers and canon. The fortress was guarded by the army of the Israelites numbering eighty persons.” The Christians attacked firing, from their artillery, firework bombs and balls of fire. The besieged “uttered cries,” which demonstrates the presence of words in the spectacle. In an epilogue, on the ruins of the burning fortress “there stood a pyramid with the Sign ‘His Royal Highness,’ all lit up from within by fire, and various feats of artillery fire surrounded it.”¹⁶ As a finale, there was a combination of illuminations showing forth the King’s initials.

One of group of dramatic firework displays was also the battle on the canal in the theatre in the Łazienki Gardens on 10 October 1791, performed for three thousand spectators after the ballet *Kleopatra*. The ships of Caesar and Anthony, “by plentiful light colourfully illuminated,” fought a battle on the water which ended in Caesar’s victory, and with the presentation of an illuminated text urging, in Polish and French, the audience to work together for national harmony. In the battle scenes there was included a firework under “the fiery crown of which one might read: ‘Vivat 7 September 1764! Vivat 3 May 1791!’” The public responded with applause, and the texts were repeated.¹⁷

The spectacles above constructed their action on the basis of a sequencing of battle scenes accompanied by effects using light, fire, fireworks and sound. Firework masters were responsible both for devising these effects and achieving them.

The Vistula river again was the stage for fire and fireworks during provincial celebrations in Bielenia (1766) and Falenty (1787).¹⁸ Here fires illuminated the figure of the

¹⁴ A. NARUSZEWICZ, *Diariusz podróży Najjaśniejszego Stanisława Augusta Króla Polskiego na Sejm Grodzieński*, Warszawa, 1784; J. JACKL, *Teatr i życie teatralne*, op. cit., 557–560.

¹⁵ *Wiadomości Warszawskie* (31 August 1765) nr 67. See: Pracownia Oświecenia IFP UG – Zbiory E. RABOWICZA.

¹⁶ [F.W.], *Przyjęcie Najjaśniejszego Pana w Siedlcach roku 1783*. D. MICHAŁEC, *Aleksandra Ogińska i jej czasy*. N.p.: Siedlce 1999, 115–154.

¹⁷ *Gazeta Narodowa i Obca* (10 October 1791) nr 73. J. Jackl, *Teatr i życie teatralne*, op. cit. 596–597.

¹⁸ *Wiadomości Warszawskie* (21 May 1766) nr 41, suppl. (24 May) nr 42. See: Pracownia Oświecenia IFP UG – Zbiory E. RABOWICZA.

Vistula, accompanied by mermaids, and a procession of Bacchus with a harlequin in attendance. In Falenty above a pond, fireworks lit up out of the darkness “a personification of the River Vistula.” And among flames from gunpowder and canon fire, “both in the air and on the water,” fireworks entertained the spectators, concluding with “a many blossomed bouquet lit above a column that bore the King’s portrait.”

The concluding apotheosis of the King harmonized with the vertically flaming fireworks, auguring a prosperous future.

We can note a particularly good example of the apotheosis of the King, placed within dramatic action, in the firework-pyrotechnic display given in Kamieniec Podolski on the name day of King Stanisław August in May 1766. It was described in *Wiadomości Warszawskie* (The Warsaw News) and in a leaflet offered to the King by Captain of Artillery Józef de Witte.¹⁹ The theatre for this display was the amphitheatre-like auditorium on the town’s parade ground and a specially prepared stage constructed in a garden and featuring a water container composed of several thousand barrels.

The curtain on this pyrotechnic theatre was raised by artillery fire. There then commenced a dynamic display, constructed as a sequence of images.

The first fireworks lit up an “obelisk in sun beams” and the King’s initials in glittering fire “beneath a crown,” followed by further inscriptions and symbolic images. Blazing fires revealed further images, drawing out of the depths an armed Mars along with his shield which contained a motto, and on the left-hand side Minerva with a decorated shield and motto. Fire spurting from under the water lit up in a roaring fiery cascade the centre of the pond. Here was also revealed Jove in the shape of a bull bearing Fortuna etc.

The action took place on a vertical axis, from the depths of the water towards the firmament, and was multiply reflected on the water’s surface. Simultaneously, the action and the sequence of images moved to the depths of the stage and were played out on a horizontal axis: out of the darkness emerged Genii “in arcadia,” more mottoes and areas for further effects.

The action was understood by the spectator by watching, recognizing and understanding the meaning of the components of the spectacle illuminated with unusual effects. The spectators’ enjoyment finished with the end of the firework display.

The dynamics and means of presentation of **dramatic actions in celebratory illuminations** were different. These were connected with the culture of city and royal residence, and their apogee came in 1791. Announcements of these dramatic spectacles was accompanied by information about numbers. The number of lamps was crucial for the splendour of the display. In an account from Kraków (8 May 1791) we read of 4000 lamps; in Kowno/Kaunas 12000 were used; and in Warsaw, on the occasion of the name day of Marshall Małachowski, the architect Merlini employed 23000. In Kalisz, Kamieniec and other cities, reports stressed that these were “coloured lights.”²⁰

The lamps that lit up town halls, city gates, and the façades of townhouses linked permanent structures with temporary architecture constructed for the occasion (obelisks in the shape of symbols, for example, an eagle, a bow, a column, a garland, and a motto). The city was thus transformed into an illuminated civic space. The meaning of the illuminations was given by written texts in various languages, congratulatory wishes,

¹⁹ *Wiadomości Warszawskie* (8 May 1766) nr 44, Addytament, op. cit.

²⁰ *Gazeta Warszawska* (May 1791) i Addytamenty. See: mf BJ Kraków sygn. 572.

mottoes, wise sayings, poems and banners with portraits, images and coats of arms. They were surrounded by symbols of power, virtues, civic ranks and eminent families. Those who created the new illuminated appearance of the city (occasional belvederes, grottoes, triumphal arches and fountains) were architects, decorators and painters, for example, Dominik Merlini, Efraim Schröeger, Jan Bogumił Persch, Bogumił Zug, and others.²¹

Illuminations began at dusk as the day of celebration moved toward evening. The gleaming light aroused the spectators – they began to look, to read the illuminated texts, to listen to music etc. There was a clear connection between reception and movement. In order to see the various illuminated edifices, the occasional architecture and the shining structures, the public strolled around, stopped and turned back, implementing the principle of “discovery” in open space. There was also collective song singing (for example, in Włodzimierz), strewing of flowers among illuminated pyramids; genii scattered incense under the King’s statue.²²

Occasional poetic works, printed in advance in *Uwiedomienia* (Announcements), formed an integral part of the illuminations. The poems were written by established authors as well as unknown writers, for example, Franciszek Jaksa Makulski, Antoni Sosenkiewicz and others.²³ It was standard practice for the entire community to take an active part in the celebration. The political character of some celebrations (for example, the Law of April, or the Law of May) brought all Poles together; the sense of community was enhanced by the openness of the space of the celebration and the fact that entry was free. Community was expressed in acts of brotherhood among the various social estates (classes) during the ceremonies, either in the church or during a celebratory banquet.²⁴

Illuminations also had *ad hoc* purposes. In September 1774, after the signing of the peace treaty between Russia and Turkey, the Russian ambassador, Stackelberg, organised a celebratory evening in Wola. The celebration included an Italian cantata, a masked ball and a splendid reception. The climax of the festivity was an illumination with fireworks. Light and fire set forth the successes of mighty Russia and the government of Catherine the Great, “the equals of the great Caesars of Rome.” A column “burning with rich fire,” modelled on Trajan’s Column, showed a series of illuminated images of triumphs.²⁵

Fire-based spectacles, like the theatre, have their **stage** and **auditorium**; they are separated by the border between fire and light, marked most frequently by a line of water. The water becomes a mirror, a stage of reflections and the multiplying of effects. A principle of **stage design** is the use of the wall of night, against the background of which figures of changing fires glow. In the fire-based dramas, part of the stage design is made up, *inter alia*, of islands, bridges, fortresses, towers, boats and ships. In the finale of such spectacles, light emphasizes those elements of the stage design connected with the message of the piece – forming, as it were, a dramaturgical climax.

²¹ J. JACKL, op. cit., 369, 478.

²² *Gazeta Warszawska* (1791) op. cit.

²³ Cf: *Wiersze polityczne Sejmu Czteroletniego. Część druga: 1790–1792*. From the papers of E. RABOWICZA, ed. K. MAKSYMOWICZ, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2000, 208–209.

²⁴ *Opisanie uroczystego obchodzenia Rocznicy Imienin Najjaśniejszego Pana oraz Pamiątki zapadłej dnia 3-go Maja 1791 r. Konstytucji*. See: Biblioteki XX Czarotoryskich, sygn. 18 812.

²⁵ *Gazeta Warszawska* (17 September 1774) nr 75; J. JACKL, op. cit., 500.

The **audience** of the fire-based presentations was the several thousand inhabitants of a given town and its surroundings. This is a mass audience, brought together by the solemn occasion, but one aware of the divisions existing outside the theatre, and, indeed, divisions that are recalled in the theatre. A process of democratization was, however, initiated via the spectacle under the open sky. It is also worth adding that the nature of fire-based spectacles is such that it is difficult to limit the circle of spectators or to isolate the spectacle because of the openness of illuminations and the rising of fires upwards in dramatic spectacles.

Words are present in this type of spectacle in poetic slogan, wise sayings, in occasional wishes and eulogies etc. Verbal texts offer intellectual communication and create shared emotions.

Fire-based spectacles are a synthesis of the arts, combining to varying degrees the possibility of theatricalization with architecture, portrait painting and landscape painting, sculpture, poetry, music, the art of bell-ringing, and the art of gardening. However, the techniques and art of pyrotechnics are dominant, demanding sound knowledge, imagination and the direct skills of the **firework artist**.

Eighteenth-century fire-based spectacles were transient, dying with the light and fire that were their components. They have, however, been described and commemorated in written texts, which demonstrates a need to commemorate them. In Polish collective life, they brought shared celebrations and a shared experience of art.

Szabadtéri tűzijáték-látványosságok a tizennyolcadik századi Lengyelországban

A felvilágosodáshoz a tűz, láng bővölete is hozzátartozott, az első pirotechnikai kézikönyvet, Amédée Frézier művét 1803-ban már kiadták lengyel fordításban, majd számos további követte, gondos fejezetekbe szerkesztve, úgy mint: tüzes látványosságok, dramatikus tűzijátékok, pirotechnikai megoldások.

A tanulmány első része a látványos pirotechnikai és tűzijátékokkal foglalkozik, melyek alkalmi jellegű előadások voltak vagy azok részét képezték; ezekről nagy mennyiségű dokumentum maradt fenn, pontos forгатókönyvvel. Stanislaw August király koronázása volt az első ilyen királyi alkalom, a látványos tűzijátékos ünneplések ezután váltak rendszeressé (királyi látogatásokkor, májusban az alkotmány ünnepekor, III. Sobieskyről való megemlékezéskor, stb.). A királyi ünnepek célja az uralkodó és a nép összetartozásának erősítése volt, s hamar kialakult a hasonló ünnepek rituéléja. E több napos (akár egy hetes!) alkalmakkor a tüzés száz díszlövése ébresztette hajnalban a település lakóit, s a lövések másnap reggelig is eltarthattak. A hadegységhez csatlakoztak az előkelők, s jelen voltak a közrendűek is: valamennyien részt vettek a gyertyás templomba vonuláson. Este a városháza előtt számtalan illumináció szórakoztatta őket: sorban megvilágított épületek, tüzek láncolata és pazar tűzijáték. A kivilágított szabadtéri opera is része volt a tűzzel kiemelt szakrális térnek. 1775-ben a Nemzeti Színház egy balett előadás helyett tűzijátékot rendezett, 1790-ben Boguslawski lángoló hajóhadat varázsolt a színre, a jezsuiták pedig többször megmutatták a Pokol félelmetes tüzeit.

A tanulmány második része a dramatikus tűzijátékokat tárgyalja. Az egyik igen részletes program a III. August nevenapján tartott előadást ismerteti: részletezi a tüzes

látványosságokon túl az uralkodói mottókat és (címer-)jelképeket, attribútumokat. A II. felvonás egy a folyón rendezett tűzijátékot ír le. A 18. században szívesen dramatizáltak kurrens eseményeket, főleg csatajeleneteket, így tengeri ütközetet és más tömeges hadi jelenetet, szinte mindig főszerepben a tűzzel. 1784-ben Gibraltár ostromát vitték színre. Sokszor rendezték a pirotechnikai látványosságokat a vízen, főleg a Visztulán: volt olyan előadás, melyet a Visztula túlsópartján felszikkasztó nagyszabású tűzijáték zárt, máskor a folyón lévő hajó adták a színhelyet.

1791-ben vált divatossá az ünnepi tűzijátékot is tartalmazó dramatikus előadás: ezekben rendkívül fontos volt az alkalmazott lámpák száma: így Krakkóban 4000, Kownóban (Kaunas) 12.000, Varsóban 23.000 lanternát használtak. Az alkonyatkor meggyújtott színes lampionok jelképeket, címerállatokat, zászlókat, versszövegeket, stb. világítottak meg.

Összefoglalva: a tűzijáték igen nagy tömegek szórakoztatására volt alkalmas. A látványosságon túl a tűz elválasztotta egymástól a tereket, így a színpadot és a nézőteret, az illumináció a megvilágított színpadot, épületet, hajót, városrészt, embereket, stb. kiemelte a környezetből, a víz pedig sajátos tükörként is működött.