

A publication for our valued theatre patrons

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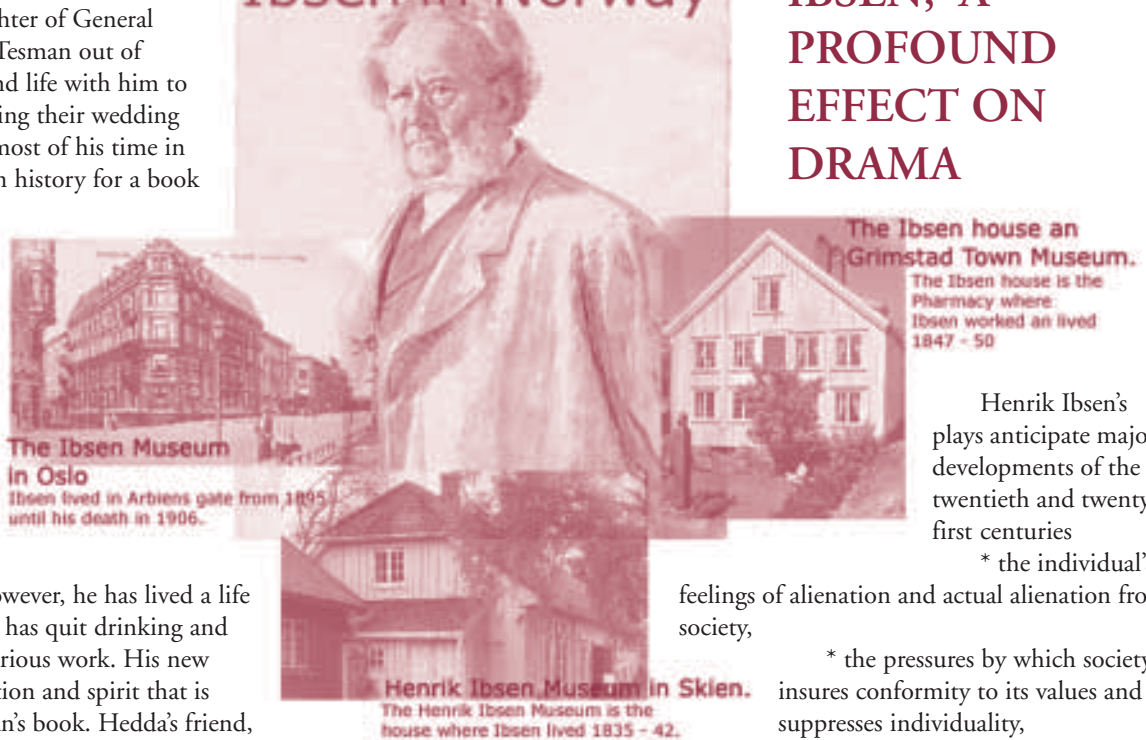
HEDDA GABLER

Hedda, the famous daughter of General Gabler, married George Tesman out of desperation, but she found life with him to be dull and tedious. During their wedding trip, her husband spent most of his time in libraries doing research in history for a book that is soon to be published. He is hoping to receive a position in the university.

An old friend of Hedda's comes to visit her and tells her of Eilert Lövborg, an old friend of both women. Eilert Lövborg has also written a book on history that is highly respected. In the past, however, he has lived a life of degeneration. Now he has quit drinking and has devoted himself to serious work. His new book has all the imagination and spirit that is missing in George Tesman's book. Hedda's friend, Thea Elvsted, tells how she has helped Eilert stop drinking and begin constructive work.

Later at a visit, Lövborg is offered a drink. He refuses and Hedda, jealous over the influence that Thea has on Lövborg, tempts him into taking a drink. He then goes to a party where he loses his manuscript. When George Tesman returns home with Lövborg's manuscript, Hedda burns it because she is jealous of it. Later, Lövborg comes to her and confesses how he has failed in his life. Hedda talks him into committing suicide by shooting himself in the temple. Lövborg does commit suicide later but it is through a wound in the stomach. George then begins to reconstruct Lövborg's manuscript with the help of notes provided by Thea Elvsted. Suddenly, Hedda leaves the room, takes her pistols, and join us and see how this Ibsen classic ends.

Ibsen in Norway



IBSEN, A PROFOUND EFFECT ON DRAMA

Henrik Ibsen's plays anticipate major developments of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries

- * the individual's feelings of alienation and actual alienation from society,
- * the pressures by which society insures conformity to its values and suppresses individuality,
- * the barriers which modern life sets up against living heroically.

Ibsen exposed other stresses of modern life by showing the inner pressures and conflicts that inhibit and even destroy the individual. Some of these pressures stem from conditioning, i.e., from the individual's internalizing society's values. John Northam distinguishes the opposing elements within the individual as the social self and the essential self. The social self is the persona which conforms to the demands of family, friends, community, and society and which an individual generally develops for acceptance or as a protection. The essential self is an individual's true Self and expresses the individual's thoughts, feelings, desires, needs, etc. This

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IBSEN, THE PLAYWRIGHT

Ibsen published his first play, *Catilina*, a tragedy in verse in 1850. As stage manager and playwright with the National Stage in Bergen, and later artistic director of the Norwegian Theatre in Oslo, he had a chance to develop his gifts as a writer. His early work celebrated the past glories of his country. *Love's Comedy*, a satirical verse play on contemporary life, was the first work to show another side to Ibsen's character. Produced while he was at the Norwegian Theatre, it was followed by *The Pretender* in 1863; the same year that a travelling fellowship removed most of his financial worries: Two years later the masterpiece *Brand* was produced and shortly after, he left Norway, spending the better part of his life in Italy and Germany; where he wrote the bulk of his plays. *Brand* — the tragedy of a supreme idealist — established Ibsen as a major European playwright. *Peer Gynt* (1867) was his last verse play, and with its completion, he moved from the realm of folklore, historical themes and romantic pageantry into the field of social realism, for which he is perhaps most widely known: *The League of Youth* and the *Pillars of Society* began this new phase of his work, and were followed by *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *Rosmersholm*, *The*

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Artist Spotlight:
Director
Jay Cotten

An interview with our guest director Jay Cotten gives you definite insight into his ability to deal with more than one project at a time. An adjunct faculty member at USA, we were in his office the last week of the Fall semester. Students were in and out asking this question and that about his Acting Class. Other members of the department were in and out. We even dealt with the hair issue for one of the characters in *Hedda*. His energy is infectious, as is his passion for the work at hand.

So, who is this man taking the helm of the production team for one of Ibsen's greatest masterpieces? He's southern born and bred, with an undergraduate degree from Millsaps College. He received his MFA from Brandeis University with their Professional Acting Company. After that he headed to NYC where as he puts it, "I did the acting stuff for about four years. I auditioned and actually did a little theatre." Then a move to upstate New York brought a job he is still passionate about. "I taught Theatre to a select group of High School Seniors which covered the gamut." The gamut was a Drama in Education approach, using theatre to teach Economics, Government, English, whatever. "It's the best way to learn about anything. A great way to study civilization. The possibilities of exploration are endless." And every semester the students wrote their own plays, some of which were then produced. "I was the producer. They directed, designed, acted, and built it. It was all theirs." The move to Mobile came to be closer to his and wife Cathy's families and to yet again. "Try something new!" The something new has brought a vibrant voice to the department at USA and now he has been hired to work at Moss Point High School in the New Year.

He is passionate about the art of acting. "My favorite thing? The Psychology of Acting. I love exploring the characters. This play at the beginnings of Realism is still classic. It's definitely a challenge for young actors. The actors are older than they are. There's a certain style which goes with the play. Realism is not just about "real" but how people's heredity and environment affect them. There is also Symbolism in here but ultimately it's about the people." What does he want the audience to come away with? "I want the modern person to see first- We all make certain choices and there are consequences for those choices. Secondly I want them to recognize the Suburban Boredom in the play. I settled for this, now what do I do? You might say *Hedda* is the original 'Desperate Housewife'. She's not willing to take the risk to be happy."

He is also finding the *Hedda* process exciting. "I love Theatre People. So far the most fun has been working with the Designers. Their ideas and research has helped make things more concrete and led me to even more ideas. Casting led to even more ideas. Each of these characters are much deeper than your first reading. Tesman especially. There is much more there than meets the eye."

And then someone else comes in with another question and we are off to another topic.

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Wild Duck, An Enemy of the People, The Lady from the Sea and *Hedda Gabler*. In these dramas, Ibsen rebelled against the perpetuation of empty traditions, so treasured by conventional society, and explored the nature of the woman of the 19th century, whose emerging self-awareness was so often in conflict with the role assigned her by that same society. His last plays effect a blending of realism and folk poetry, using symbolism as their idiom. *The Master Builder, Little Eyolf, John Gabriel Borkman* and *When We Dead Awaken* belong to this group. In 1891, Ibsen returned to Norway, settling in Christiania (Oslo); where he remained until his death in 1906.

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distinction, which is a useful concept in general, has particular relevance to *Hedda Gabler*.

A primary value for Ibsen is freedom, which he believed to be essential for self-fulfillment. Of the "many things" which his later writings, including *Hedda Gabler*, were concerned with, Ibsen specifically identified "contradictions between ability and desire, or between will and circumstance, the mingled tragedy and comedy of humanity and the individual."

Ibsen was constantly experimenting and pushing boundaries in his writing. This habit of exploration often made him and his plays controversial and shocked conservative critics and audiences. Of this habit, he said, "Where I stood then, when I wrote my various books, there is now a fairly compact crowd, but I myself am no longer there; I am somewhere else, I hope in front." His constant changing often confused contemporary theater-goers and critics, who had to keep adjusting their expectations of an Ibsen play. His repeated changes and experimenting also make it difficult to place Ibsen and his plays in neat categories. Adding to the difficulty of classifying him is the complexity with which he presents his heroes and themes. The resulting ambiguity has enabled readers to find support for their own beliefs and to claim him as a member of their movements. This is true today, as it was in the nineteenth century. Over the years, Ibsen has been called a revolutionary, a nationalist, a romantic, a poet, an idealist, a realist, a socialist, a naturalist, a symbolist, a feminist, and a forerunner of psychoanalysis.

Ibsen had a profound effect on the drama both of his own time and in the twentieth century. His plays stimulated the avant-garde theater in Germany and France, and only the plays of George Bernard Shaw had a greater impact in England. The demands of his plays caused directors to find new ways of staging plays and actors to develop new ways of acting. The declamatory style of acting in vogue during Ibsen's day could not, for example, convincingly present the natural dialogue of Ibsen's later plays, with its sentence fragments, exclamations, and short statements. (Such dialogue is commonplace in plays, movies, and TV dramas today, and we take it for granted; however, in Ibsen's day it was an innovation which confused and upset theater-goers.) In fact, *Hedda Gabler* failed when introduced in Germany largely because the actress played Hedda in the traditional declamatory manner, which did not fit Ibsen's natural dialogue.



COTTEN, ON DIRECTING

Is the title character in *Hedda Gabler* a late-19th-century Medea? Is she a victim of the society into which she is born? Hedda Gabler Tesman is certainly an enigma. She is obviously a strong-willed, intelligent force of nature who lives in a time and place where women do not have an opportunity to take on traditional men's roles. This situation causes extreme frustration for a person such as Hedda. However, instead of attempting to change the social system or to fight it, or perhaps to find her own unique way of contributing, Hedda chooses to lament her plight, proclaim her boredom and disdain for her husband, and get pleasure out of manipulating others.

The true conflict of *Hedda Gabler* is Hedda's inability to find a reason for her own existence other than serving herself. She feels useless. She is "bored, bored, bored" and a self-confessed coward. She lives in a prison, one that she has created for herself. She is not willing to take risks, and she finds no value in selflessly helping others. The play truly is "all about Hedda Gabler Tesman." Hedda could certainly be a prototype for many of today's angst-ridden characters who can find no purpose in their lives other than serving themselves. In fact, she could serve as a model for many people in today's myopic society. Here is a person who has the gifts of intelligence, energy, beauty, and charisma, but she uses all of these gifts only for herself.



SET DESIGN FOR *HEDDA GABLER* BY LYLE MILLER

TICKET & BOX OFFICE INFORMATION PHONE (251)-460-6306

Tickets for Theatre USA's Production of *Hedda Gabler*
General Admission \$12.00 Faculty/ Staff \$10.00
Students * \$8.00

The Box Office will be open Monday Jan. 29 - Feb. 18 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm & one hour before each performance.

The Box Office is located in the lobby of the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center on the main campus of The University of South Alabama. Tickets are sold first come first served. All seats reserved. All sales final. No refund or exchange.

*Student tickets available for all students with valid ID. One ticket per ID.

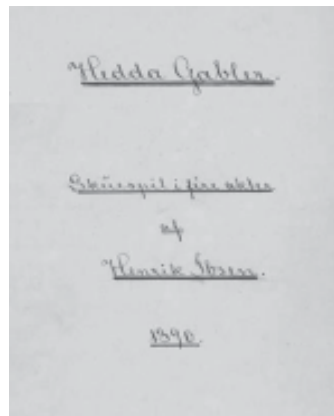
Dear Count Prozor:

I shall not let a moment go by before replying briefly to the letter I have just had the pleasure of receiving from you.

The title of the play is *Hedda Gabler*. My intention in giving it this name was to indicate that Hedda as a personality is to be regarded rather as her father's daughter than as her husband's wife.

It was not really my intention to deal in this play with so-called problems. What I principally wanted to do was to depict human beings, human emotions, and human destinies, upon a groundwork of certain of the social conditions and principles of the present day. When you have read the whole, my fundamental idea will be clearer to you than I can make it by entering into further explanations.

Henrik Ibsen excerpt from letter to Moritz Prozor —
December 4, 1890



ORIGINAL TITLE PAGE FOR *HEDDA*

CAST FOR *HEDDA GABLER*

Hedda Tesman
..... Camille Perillo
George Tesman
..... Jason Peregoy
Julia Tesman
..... Soncitharai Moore
Mrs. Elvsted Kristi Firmin
Judge Brack . Michael Waldron
Eilert Lovborg ... Iori Nishizawa
Berta Nora K. Vickers

IBSEN, NOTES ON PLAY CRAFTING

"Before I write down one word, I have to have the character in mind through and through. I must penetrate into the last wrinkle of his soul. I always proceed from the individual; the stage setting, the dramatic ensemble, all of that comes naturally and does not cause me any worry, as soon as I am certain of the individual in every aspect of his humanity. But I have to have his exterior in mind also, down to the last button, how he stands and walks, how he conducts himself, what his voice sounds like. Then I do not let him go until his fate is fulfilled. As a rule, I make three drafts of my dramas which differ very much from each other in characterization, not in action. When I proceed to the first sketch of the material I feel as though I had the degree of acquaintance with my characters that one acquires on a railway journey; one has met and chatted about this or that. With the next draft I see everything more clearly, I know characters just about as one would know them after a few weeks' stay in a spa; I have learned the fundamental traits in their characters as well as their little peculiarities; yet it is not impossible that I might make an error in some essential matter. In the last draft, finally, I stand at the limit of knowledge; I know my people from close and long association - they are my intimate friends, who will not disappoint me in any way; in the manner in which I see them now, I shall always see them."



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 251-460-6305 or email jlambard@usouthal.edu
 Please visit our web site at www.southalabama.edu/drama

Hedda Gabler

By Henrik Ibsen

February 10-11 & 16-18
 at 7:30 pm

February 12 @ 2:00

Laidlaw Performing
 Arts Center

Ticket Information
 (251) 460-6306

