

ALMEIDA

THEATRE



HEDDA GABLER

BY HENRIK IBSEN

PROJECTS PACK COMPILED BY
REBECCA MANSON JONES, SARAH DICKENSON, JOANNA INGHAM



HEDDA GABLER

BY HENRIK IBSEN

IN A VERSION BY RICHARD EYRE

FROM A LITERAL TRANSLATION BY KARIN & ANN BAMBOROUGH

Arriving home after an extended honeymoon, HEDDA TESMAN struggles with an existence that is devoid of excitement and enchantment.

Filled with a passion for life that cannot be confined by her marriage or 'perfect home', Hedda strives to find a way to fulfil her desires by manipulating those around her.

Welcome to our production of *Hedda Gabler* which is previewing at the time of writing. The production has already created quite a buzz in our Victorian theatre with the audience quite literally on the edge of their seats.

Director and version writer, Richard Eyre, has - together with designer Rob Howell, the cast and the creative and production team - created a play which whilst dressed in the clothes and set amongst the heavy furniture of our great-grand parents' era, reaches forward to 2005 and grips us by the throat.

Funny, provoking and ultimately chilling, this production reminds us both why audiences reacted so strongly for and against Ibsen during his lifetime and why presenting him 100 years on tells each of us something about ourselves.

This projects pack, compiled with Sarah Dickenson and Joanna Ingham, has been created alongside the rehearsal process to give you some insight into Ibsen's life and work and the creative process behind this production. All of our projects work is designed to be practical and encourage active participation as well as reflection.

We suggest you refer to the pack as you continue to read and work with the play but if you are new to the play you may prefer to read the synopsis and try out some of the character exercises before you see the production. As you continue your study, you may like to revisit these early thoughts and see how your ideas have changed and developed.

Before your visit to the Almeida, many of you will take part in a workshop led by one of the Almeida Projects team.

These workshops are designed to introduce you to the play and how the production has been made. When you come to the theatre, your group will be met by one of the team who will be happy to answer questions about the theatre and our work.

Ibsen maintained that each character in *Hedda Gabler* contained a facet of his own character. The production reflects this in the strength and detail of each of the performances.

We hope when you see the production and as you use this pack to explore the play, you'll begin to see what Ibsen meant and discover that there is more to *Hedda Gabler* than Hedda Gabler.

Rebecca Manson Jones, Director, Almeida Projects

ALMEIDA

THEATRE

PRODUCTION CREDITS

In order of appearance:

Juliana Tesman	Gillian Raine
Berthe	Sarah Flind
George Tesman	Benedict Cumberbatch
Hedda Tesman	Eve Best
Thea Elvsted	Lisa Dillon
Judge Brack	Iain Glen
Eilert Loevborg	Jamie Sives

Direction	Richard Eyre
Design	Rob Howell
Lighting	Peter Mumford
Sound	John Leonard
Casting	Maggie Lunn
Production Manager	James Crout
Company Manager	Rupert Carlile
Stage Manager	Suzanne Bourque
Deputy Stage Manager	Vicki Liles
Assistant Stage Manager	Kate McDowell
Costume Supervisor	Edward Gibbon
Wig Supervisor	Zoe Goodchild

Deputy Wardrobe Supervisor	Holly Hughes
Production Carpenter	Craig Emerson
Chief Technician	Jason Wescombe
Lighting Technician	Robin Fisher
Sound Technician	Matthew Berry
Assistant Technician	Pauk Mansfield
Stage Crew	Martin Barron
	Dominic Rose

Scenic Artist	Gordon Aldred
Assistant Scenic Artist	Cathy Stewart
Set Built By	Rocket Scenery
Stage Management	
Placement	Kiera Wheelwright

Production Photographer John Haynes

Almeida Projects Team

Projects Director:	Rebecca Manson Jones
Projects Pack:	Sarah Dickenson
	Joanna Ingham
Projects Assistant:	Nadia Syed
Group Bookings:	Nuala Phillips

Projects Associates

Derek Bond	Curtis Jordan
Martin Brody	Ben Lambert
Helen Eastman	Tom Mackay
Ben Evans	Mila Sanders
Julia Findlay	Melissa Smith
Kirsty Hoiles	
Michele Hooper	
Claire Houlton	

The Almeida Theatre



Originally built as a lecture theatre, the Almeida is a Grade II listed building. The nature of working in a found space puts some restrictions on us as audience and artists. For example, our seats are designed to take up as little space as possible and aren't always as comfortable as other theatre seats. We have a few pillars holding up the circle which you may have to look round from where you are sitting. The best thing about the Almeida is how we are able to produce the epic on an intimate scale with a very close connection between the performers and the audience. That's why we're very strict about asking everyone in our audience to turn off mobile phones, not to eat, cough or whisper during the performance. Please try to remember that everything that happens in the audience is heard and seen by the cast on stage. We want every performance to be a great one and we ask for your help to ensure that it is.

JULIANA TESMAN
(AUNT JUJU)

GEORGE TESMAN'S AUNT, 65

A spinster, has spent most of her life looking after her dead brother's son, George. Old-fashioned, not without some worldly aspirations, she lives to see George happy. For some years has been caring for her sister Rena, an invalid. Has missed George greatly during his honeymoon and despite disapproving of the expense involved in setting up his home, is excited to see him happy and prospering.



HEDDA GABLER

Characters in order of appearance

MRS ELVSTED

WIFE OF A TAX-INSPECTOR, 28

Born Thea Rysing, Thea has never really had a home. Failing to secure a husband in society despite receiving the attentions of George Tesman for a brief time, she was forced to seek employment as a governess in the provinces, finally with the High Sheriff, Elvsted. Although 20 years his junior, Thea became Elvsted's wife and her pupils' stepmother. Her empty life was suddenly filled with the arrival of a new tutor and sometime writer, Eilert Loevborg. Whilst collaborating on his book, she has fallen in love and when Eilert returns to town she follows him, abandoning both home and husband.



BERTHE

THE TESMAN'S MAID, 55

Formerly maid to "Miss Juju" and nurse to "Master Georgie", Berthe has worked for the family since she was a child. Rather at sea in the new house, she is worried that she is not up to scratch for Madame Hedda who is used to a complete staff of servants. We know nothing more of Berthe's life.



JUDGE BRACK, 45

A pillar of society and fashionable gentleman, Brack is from the same class as Hedda. By dint of his profession, he has influence in all spheres. Handsome, witty and charming, Brack has managed to avoid marriage but very much enjoys the company of witty, charming women.

GEORGE TESMAN
ACADEMIC, 33

Recently married to the most admired woman in society, George Tesman is a respected if not admired academic. He is expected to do well in academic circles although he has never set the world on fire with his conversation. A dogged plodder rather than a brilliant man, he has always received great support from his Aunts on whom he continues to rely.



EILERT LOEBORG

WRITER - SOMETIME RIVAL TO TESMAN, 30s

Eilert has a reputation as a rebel, refusing to conform to society's rules. He has known Hedda as a young woman and dazzled her with his tales. He has a brilliant mind but his passion for wine and women has wrecked his career. After some time spent reforming, he has been welcomed back into society after the publication of his new book.



HEDDA TESMAN NÉE GABLER

A SOCIETY LADY, 30

A member of the aristocracy, daughter of the renowned General. Hedda Gabler has always enjoyed creating a stir and flouting convention up to a point. She has been the centre of the social whirl and much admired. She delighted in listening in to the world of men by having Loevborg tell her of his adventures. Afraid of

scandal, she has only indulged in mild flirtations. After her father's death, Hedda has decided she should marry and encourages George Tesman although she dislikes his relations and hopes to keep up her own connections. After 6 months of keeping herself amused on honeymoon whilst George researches his book and in the face of an unwanted pregnancy, Hedda is under stress.



Write the thumbnail sketches of the off-stage characters:

General Gabler,
Aunt Rena,
Mr Elvsted,
Mademoiselle Diana



ACT ONE - MORNING

JULIANA TESMAN (AUNT JUJU) arrives to see her nephew GEORGE TESMAN (GEORGIE), after a long honeymoon with his new wife HEDDA, formerly HEDDA GABLER. The couple are not yet up. Whilst waiting JUJU talks with BERTHE, formerly her own maid, now "looking after Georgie". BERTHE is nervous about her new mistress and AUNT JUJU expresses her surprise and a sense of triumph about the marriage. HEDDA, GENERAL GABLER's daughter, is a great catch. JUJU and BERTHE gossip about the house and about GEORGE, the object of their affections. He has recently gained a doctorate. JUJU has high hopes for his career. She is suddenly shocked to see that the dust covers have been removed from the best furniture but BERTHE assures her that HEDDA insists that the room is for everyday use.

GEORGE is delighted to see his Aunt, and apologises for leaving her at the quayside the previous evening. They discuss the honeymoon, the house and AUNT RENA, JUJU'S invalid sister. GEORGE tells of his hopes for a Professorship at the University but what JUJU really wants to know is whether HEDDA is pregnant. JUJU admires the house but cannot hide her concerns about its cost. JUDGE BRACK has helped out with the negotiations but even so AUNT JUJU has had to stand security for the furniture using her only pension. GEORGE is both embarrassed and concerned but at the same time insists that HEDDA must have the best of everything just as she wants it.

They discuss EILERT LOEVborg, GEORGE's former professional rival and a dissolute man, who after a period spent reforming, has published a new book which has been very well received in Christiania.



When HEDDA eventually appears, she is wearing her dressing gown. She is dissatisfied with the house, the maid and deliberately snubs JUJU by pretending to mistake her new hat for BERTHE's. Nothing daunted, JUJU takes her leave but not before guessing that HEDDA is pregnant, a thought which gives her great delight. GEORGE promises to visit his Aunts later.

MRS ELVSTED (THEA), an old flame of TESMAN's, arrives in a state of great distress. She reveals that LOEVborg has been in town for the last week and she is concerned that he will fall back into his old ways. TESMAN is keen to discuss Loeborg's new book with her. HEDDA asks him to write a note to LOEVborg inviting him to their home, ostensibly so they can check he is safe and well. Alone with MRS ELVSTED, HEDDA persuades her to confide in her and insists they address each other by their first names. Despite THEA's memories of HEDDA as a bully, THEA

takes comfort and reveals that it is through her influence that EILERT has given up drinking and bad behaviour. He has been engaged by her husband, formerly her employer, as tutor to ELVSTED's children. In their spare time, she has helped EILERT with his writing. However, EILERT is haunted by the ghost of a former passion of his, the identity of whom he has concealed. The only details THEA has about her rival is that she threatened to shoot EILERT when they parted, has red hair and is a kind of performer. THEA has abandoned her home in the country without her husband's knowledge to find EILERT and has no thought of returning. HEDDA admires her courage. JUDGE BRACK arrives. HEDDA accompanies MRS ELVSTED to the door leaving TESMAN and BRACK to talk. When HEDDA comes back, they discuss LOEVborg's return. BRACK suggests the professorship GEORGE has been expecting might actually go to his rival. TESMAN is horrified, especially with the burden of their expensive home. HEDDA sees a delay to her dream of creating a fashionable salon, placing herself at the centre of society. She decides to cheer herself up by playing with her Father's guns.

ACT TWO - EARLY EVENING



HEDDA is alone, dressed to entertain. She is loading a pistol. BRACK arrives through the garden. HEDDA fires in his direction. He is furious. Their conversation is sexually charged and implies a former flirtation. HEDDA speaks of her boredom on her honeymoon, with marriage and with life generally. They discuss her reasons for marrying GEORGE. BRACK proposes that they could enjoy a discrete liaison under the camouflage of her marriage but HEDDA refuses. HEDDA confesses that she doesn't really like their new house and shares her dream that TESMAN might go into politics to give her something to do, an idea which BRACK ridicules. She firmly denies any interest in motherhood. Her only vocation is to bore herself to death. TESMAN joins them.

LOEVborg arrives. TESMAN congratulates him on the success of his book. Loeborg dismisses the praise and reveals that he has been working on another, more exciting book, the manuscript of which is in his pocket. BRACK and TESMAN invite LOEVborg to their dinner but he refuses. HEDDA suggests that he might rather stay for supper with MRS ELVSTED and her. TESMAN asks LOEVborg about the professorship and LOEVborg assures him that he will not stand in his way.

SYNOPSIS

HEDDA manoeuvres EILERT into a quiet chat. EILERT reveals his horror at her marriage. They recall the days at General Gabler's house when EILERT would recount his misdemeanours and sexual adventures to the young HEDDA. The relationship has been intense but repressed. HEDDA threatened to shoot EILERT when he went too far and he was sent away. Now, as then, HEDDA rebuffs EILERT. When he attempts to reignite their passion HEDDA states that she will not consider infidelity. When EILERT asks if she ever loved him, she explains that she found it thrilling to learn about the world through his stories. She had been unwilling to take the relationship further for fear of scandal, but she now implies a sense of regret for her cowardliness.



MRS ELVSTED arrives. LOEVBORG is pleased to see her. HEDDA, jealous, tests her power by manipulating LOEVBORG into taking a drink and going out with the men. THEA is powerless to stop him and is caught in the power game between LOEVBORG and HEDDA. When BRACK and TESMAN leave, LOEVBORG joins them after agreeing to return early to accompany MRS ELVSTED home. Intoxicated by her sense of regained power over LOEVBORG, HEDDA creates an image of him returning in triumph: "Like Bacchus with vine leaves in his hair" - back to his former self. She frightens THEA who has no choice but to wait.

INTERVAL

ACT THREE - THE NEXT MORNING

THEA and HEDDA are asleep in the living room. HEDDA sends THEA up to bed for a proper rest. TESMAN comes in looking tired. He tells HEDDA about the book LOEVBORG is working on, some of which LOEVBORG read aloud the evening before. TESMAN praises it very highly but confesses his envy of LOEVBORG's genius. To HEDDA's delight, he describes LOEVBORG's wildness and excess after the dinner. He was so drunk that he did not notice dropping his manuscript. TESMAN rescued it and has brought it home for safe-keeping.

A letter has arrived from AUNT JUJU to say that Aunt Rena is dying. GEORGE rushes off to be with his Aunts. JUDGE BRACK arrives. HEDDA hides the manuscript. BRACK reveals that LOEVBORG ended up at a brothel run by Mademoiselle Diana, the woman who has haunted him. The evening turned nasty when LOEVBORG accused Diana of stealing something, started a fight and was taken to the police station. BRACK has come to warn HEDDA not to allow LOEVBORG into her home, and she senses correctly that this is partly motivated by jealousy. BRACK suggests that he is determined to be the only other man in HEDDA's life.

After BRACK leaves, LOEVBORG barges in, dishevelled and distressed. THEA appears and EILERT breaks off their relationship; he tells her that he has destroyed their work and doesn't need her to inspire him anymore. THEA, devastated, accuses him of killing their baby. She leaves. EILERT then confesses to HEDDA that he did not destroy the book but has lost it, to his profound shame. He is suicidal; HEDDA gives him one of her father's guns and asks him to do it 'beautifully'. When alone, HEDDA burns the manuscript.

ACT FOUR - THAT EVENING

HEDDA, dressed in mourning, receives AUNT JUJU. Aunt Rena has died. They discuss Rena's death and less directly, HEDDA's pregnancy. TESMAN comes in and JUJU tells them of her plans to care for other ill people and hints at the alternative possibility of helping out in HEDDA's house once there is a child. HEDDA refuses.

When JUJU leaves, TESMAN explains his concerns about LOEVBORG. He cannot

understand why HEDDA did not give LOEVBORG the manuscript when he came looking for it. HEDDA tells him that she has burnt it; he is horror-struck. HEDDA explains she did it with his best interests at heart. Calling him by his first name for the first time, she hints that she is pregnant and his emotions swing to joy. GEORGE is moved by Hedda's sign of tenderness towards him.

THEA rushes in, very worried about LOEVBORG as she has heard rumours that he is in hospital. BRACK then arrives with the news that LOEVBORG is dying and that he shot himself through the heart. HEDDA finds it beautiful. They talk about the manuscript. THEA takes out some pages of notes which she has kept carefully. GEORGE is very excited and they start to try to put LOEVBORG'S book back together then and there. BRACK and HEDDA are left to talk. BRACK reveals that LOEVBORG is already dead and that he was actually shot in the groin, shattering all HEDDA's illusions. BRACK recognised the gun as one of General Gabler's. He will keep HEDDA'S name out of the scandal but she will always be in his power.

HEDDA notices how contented GEORGE and THEA look, working away together. She is of no use to them in their new undertaking. BRACK's presence weighs heavily upon her.

HEDDA plays a wild dance on the piano but GEORGE tells her to be more respectful to the dead. HEDDA asserts she will be quiet for ever. She moves away from the rest of the company and a little while later a shot is heard.

HEDDA has shot herself.



LIFE IS NOT TRAGIC. LIFE IS RIDICULOUS, AND THAT CANNOT BE BORNE.*

Ibsen believed freedom to be essential for self-fulfilment and in *Hedda Gabler* he presents a group of characters who strive for their ideals but who have to be content with compromise. Hedda sees the essential absurdity of this and cannot bear to live. Ibsen plays with contradictions: contradictions between ability and desire, or between will and circumstance, the mingled tragedy and comedy of humanity and the individual.

Here are some of the themes which we've identified in the play. Before you see the production, write down as a group which themes you think are the most important from your work on the play so far (if you're new to the play, read the synopsis, look at the themes we've highlighted, or come to the production without any preconceptions or if you have some, write those down too). After you've seen the production, brainstorm 10 things you remember. Which images stick in your mind? Compare these brainstorm memories with your first list. Note the similarities and the differences. What is it about the live performance which has changed or consolidated your ideas as compared with reading or rehearsing the play yourselves? What choices do you think director, designers and actors have made to influence you as an audience?

LIKE BACCHUS WITH VINE-LEAVES IN HIS HAIR

THE IDEAL AND THE POSSIBLE

Throughout the play, we see characters struggling with their wish to attain the ideal and their grudging acceptance of the possible. Hedda has an ideal vision of Eilert, rebellious, independent, unbowed at Brack's party, a party to which she can never go and a style of life she can't or won't let herself live.

At the opening of the play, Tesman finds himself in the apparently unbelievable position of having it all:

beautiful wife,
fantastic house,
brilliant career,
supportive family,
loyal servant.

Lurking beneath all this are the threats of debts,

his wife's indifference to him,
Hedda's hostility to his family,
the return of a rival.

Look at each of the characters by turn and list the ideal and the possible for each of them.

What compromises do they have to make in order to survive?

Ideal	Possible	Compromise

How much of their sacrifice is dictated by external forces (eg: luck, social position etc) and what is to do with their internal characteristics (eg: talent, determination, selfishness?)

What are your ideals - what's standing in your way, how far would you go to achieve them?

Does any of these characters' dilemmas strike a chord with yours?

EILERT LOEVBORG WAS BRAVE ENOUGH TO LIVE LIFE ON HIS OWN TERMS

BRAVERY/COWARDICE

BRAVERY is the one quality which Hedda admires in others, largely because she doesn't have it herself.

The only time she ever expresses approval of Thea is when she tells how she has left her husband.

Hedda despises herself for being neither able to have shot Eilert nor to have slept with him.

Hedda thinks that Eilert's book reading will be beautiful and brave. When this fails she believes that his suicide will be beautiful and brave. Once she has heard the truth and has realised the absurdity of her own life - useless to her husband and dependent on the whim of Judge Brack - do you think her suicide is beautiful and brave or cowardly and cheap?



FREEDOM/CONSTRAINT

BRACK CAN TRAP HEDDA INTO THE ARRANGEMENT HE HAS PROPOSED IN ACT TWO, AS A RESULT OF HER IDEALISTIC AND ILL-CONCEIVED ATTEMPT TO CONTROL THE LIFE OF SOMEONE ELSE.

THE WORLD IN WHICH THE CHARACTERS LIVE IS VERY SMALL AND EACH IS CONSTRAINED BY THE RIGOURS OF A HIERARCHICAL SOCIETY.

FROM THEIR CLOTHES TO THEIR SPEECH, TO THE WAYS TO HAVE FUN OR EARN A LIVING, A NINETEENTH CENTURY EUROPEAN FINDS HIS/HER WORLD VERY NARROWLY DEFINED.

POWER

*THE DAEMON IN HEDDA IS THAT SHE WANTS TO INFLUENCE ANOTHER HUMAN BEING, BUT ONCE THAT HAS HAPPENED, SHE DESPISES HIM.**



For Hedda, second after her fear of entrapment, comes fear of scandal. The two are closely linked. If you can flout convention as Hedda delights in doing: riding out with her father, receiving guests in her dressing gown and barefoot, using the drawing room for everyday, shooting at guests through the French windows, marrying the man nobody would have expected her to; then you can appear to be independent and self-reliant. Society can admire a beautiful, unconventional woman if her rebellions are small and self-contained but if the world at large knows your business and does not approve, then you are somehow in thrall to them.

How much do you think the other characters worry about what society thinks of them?



*I'LL BE IN YOUR POWER THEN. FOR EVER.
I WON'T BE FREE. YOU'LL OWN ME. I'LL BE YOUR SLAVE.*

Divide the group in half. One half of the group is looking from the perspective of the women and the other from the men in the play.

In your group, choose one of the men/women and look for the constraints imposed on them. When you find a constraint imposed on your character, note it down.

Share your findings with the whole group. What are the biggest differences between the women and the men? Is there anything which is the same? How is each of the women dependent on the good will of men for their security? What strategies does each character have for coping with their confinement?

Is any of these things still the same in your life or friends' lives?

Hedda is not permitted to have power in the world or even over the path of her own life. Even in the home, while she has some power over Berthe, the ultimate decision-making power lies with her husband. Therefore she is twisted into taking power for herself by manipulating weaker people than herself, such as Thea and Eilert, and she delights in controlling them.

PEOPLE ... DON'T ... DO THINGS LIKE THAT ...

RESPECTABILITY/SCANDAL

'Rumours and gossip! Of all the frightening images in a woman's existence, these are the most illusory, the most horrible chimerae. Nothing has a greater power to subdue and subject a woman into obedience. Nothing affects her life more demonically than these powerless and irresponsible attacks which we are accustomed to calling rumors and gossip. ... Thanks to our society's deep commitment to approval, which has placed the fragile crystal of femininity in the centre of society's own impurity, admonishing the crystal always to remain crystal clear, no stain is needed in order to obscure its pure lustre; only a breath. All that is necessary is for people to talk. ...'

Camilla Collett, The District Governor's Daughters, 1855

Society/ Manners

The characters sometimes use first names and sometimes surnames to refer to each other. In a nineteenth century drawing room, using the correct forms of address as well as behaving correctly was very important.

Which characters call each other by their first names and which don't? What are the reasons? How can the use of names display power and status?

When you see the production, note carefully when and how people stand and sit. Who are people more formal with and why? Who breaks the rules and how?

*THERE'S ONLY ONE THING I HAVE A VOCATION FOR...
BORING MYSELF TO DEATH.*

EXCITEMENT/ BOREDOM/ ABSURDITY

*'[Women] realize that life holds a purpose for them, but they cannot find that purpose'**

Hedda complains of boredom and at the same time rejects the sexual excitement offered by Brack and Loevborg. Thea moulders away in her husband's house until Loevborg gives her life purpose.

For Hedda the few options for excitement available to her - roles as wife, mistress and mother - do not interest her. Her creative spark has no obvious outlet and her intelligence is not matched by her education. Brought up a snob, anything practical she might undertake is considered by her to be beneath her. The one career she has entertained vicariously, politics, is closed to her because the Tesmans lack money and because Tesman himself is so ill-suited for such a career.

GENIUS/ MEDIOCRITY

AMAZING! I'D NEVER THINK OF WRITING SOMETHING LIKE THAT.



Hedda is frustrated by Tesman's ordinariness. He has nothing of the original about him.

Whilst Loevborg is not afraid to enjoy adventures in life, to explore new ideas and even create them, Tesman is a researcher, an explorer of other people's thoughts - epitomised by the final image of him piecing together Eilert's book from Thea's notes.

*IT'S REALLY A MAN'S LIFE SHE WANTS TO LEAD. IN ALL RESPECTS. BUT THEN SCRUPLES INTERVENE. SOME INHERITED - SOME IMPLANTED.**

HEROES/ MARTYRS

Ibsen's plays contain some of the strongest female characters in dramatic history: women who reject the status quo, who yearn to live outside imposed limits and who want more than society deems appropriate for them.

Hedda as a heroine knows that she can do nothing heroic but only try to live a heroic life through others until she is outmanoeuvred by Brack.

At the other end of the spectrum is the life of the martyr - eg: consider the roles of Juju and Thea, both women for whom life has only gained purpose by self-sacrifice.

Why do you think such a life is impossible for Hedda?



Does our society's obsession with celebrity make us guilty of living vicariously? Do we live our ideals of glamour and success through the pages of Heat and Hello?

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.

Ibsen's letter to translator Mortiz Prozer, 1890

TIME TO LEAVE THE DANCE FLOOR

MARRIAGE

One of the puzzles in the play is why Hedda marries George. The actress playing Hedda has to understand this in her own head. Imagine you are preparing to play Hedda. Use the exercises below to find reasons of your own.

Two of the women we meet are married - Hedda and Thea - and neither happily. What is it about their husbands that disappoints them? What is it that their husbands can offer them?

For the men, marriage brings respect, the hope of a convivial home life, the prospect of an heir but also financial responsibilities and some social constraints.

Work out what advantages and disadvantages there are for the male characters about being married or unmarried.

Now consider the unmarried women we meet and hear of in the play: Aunts Juju and Rena, Berthe, Madame Diana. For each of these women certain spheres of life and experience are forever closed to them. What is their social status as compared with the wives?

Read the scene between Hedda and Judge Brack in Act Two aloud. What are the reasons Hedda gives for marrying Tesman?

Read the scene between Hedda and Loevborg in Act Two. What influence has this relationship had on Hedda's decision to marry?

HAVE YOU ANY NEWS GEORGE?

MOTHERHOOD

Mothers do not feature in Hedda Gabler. We hear neither of Hedda's, George's nor Thea's mother. Hedda appears to have been brought up by her father and George by his aunts.

The natural consequence of marriage in the 19th century before the era of birth control was children. Hedda isn't in the remotest bit interested in becoming a mother and indeed seems to be in conflict with her body.

THEY [WOMEN] AREN'T ALL CREATED TO BE MOTHERS*

I'M BURNING YOUR BABY.



Without a vocation for motherhood, Hedda's pregnancy haunts her throughout the play like a dreadful imposition.

For those women with no choice about becoming a mother, the idea is not always welcome.

Hedda is among the first female characters to articulate these thoughts on stage, voicing what many women past and present had privately thought but not dared speak.

Childfree women today are very common but in many parts of society, the decision not to have children or for a woman to leave her children is still considered one of the worst taboos.

Juju, Rena and Berthe have compensated for their lack of children by bringing up George.

How has Thea replaced children in her life?

ANYONE WHO WISHES TO UNDERSTAND ME FULLY MUST KNOW NORWAY*



*'Anyone who wishes to understand me fully must know Norway. The spectacular but severe landscape which people have around them in the north, and the lonely shut-off life - the houses often lie miles from each other - force them not to bother about other people, but only their own concerns, so that they become reflective and serious, they brood and doubt and often despair. In Norway, every second man is a philosopher. And those dark winters, with the thick mists outside - ah, they long for the sun!' **

Like many small nations, Norway's history has been peppered with invasions and unions with other countries. In 1814, Norway became an independent kingdom with a constitution not different from that of the USA ending 400 years of Danish rule. Then, in the same year, Norway made a union with the neighbouring Scandinavian country of Sweden. The King of Sweden became King of Norway with Norway enjoying internal self-rule.

Towards the end of the 19th Century, and around the same time as Ibsen was writing his plays, there was a strong movement within Norway for full independence.

On 7th June 1905, the Norwegian Parliament (known as the Storting) announced they no longer recognized the King of Sweden as their monarch, and the union between the two countries was dissolved.

On October 26th 1905, Sweden officially recognized Norway as independent. A new monarchy was established in Norway. Prince Carl of Denmark became Norwegian King in November 1905.

His descendants sit on the throne today. This year marks the centenary of Norway's independence.

NORWEGIAN SOCIETY

Christiania (now Oslo), the capital of Norway, is the setting for the play. Christiania was a rapidly growing town of about 140,000 people in a total population of about 5 million. The aristocratic circle was very small with a rising middle-class. Brack, an assessor in the High Court, and the Gablers belong to the upper-classes, the Tesmans from a more conservative upper-middle class. This is a community in which everyone knows everything about everyone else.

'MEN WITH SUCH SLAVE SOULS AS OURS CANNOT MAKE USE EVEN OF THE LIBERTIES THEY ALREADY POSSESS. NORWAY IS A FREE COUNTRY PEOPLED BY UNFREE MEN AND WOMEN'. Ibsen, 1882

HEDDA GABLER is set in the drawing room of George Tesman's house, in a fashionable part of Christiania (now Oslo). September 1890s.



The House represents Norwegian Society - the 8th character.

Write a thumbnail description of the House, its history and imagine the events it may have witnessed. You can use this information to help you decide how you would design the set.

In Ibsen's theatre, the fashion was for realistic design. Rob Howell, the designer, has worked with Richard Eyre to create a design which reflects the period but also introduces some non-naturalistic elements. As you watch the play, you'll notice that the finishes on the wall change from faultless to cracking plaster. The stage is gently sloping and also on the diagonal. What themes is Rob emphasising in this interpretation?

(For more on design see page 14)

Hedda Gabler and the other characters live through a time of great and often confusing change. We've listed some of the most significant changes and inserted some of the main events which can be established from the script about Hedda's life. This is what we call BACK STORY and the assumptions we've used are based on Eve Best's research into the character. On the left are events from Norway and Scandinavia and on the right events from around the world.

1830s	<p>GENERAL GABLER BORN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Hans Christian Anderson publishes the first of his children's stories (Denmark). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Queen Victoria comes to the throne. ♦ Slavery is abolished in the British Empire.
1840s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Oscar I King of Norway & Sweden. ♦ Rapid growth of industry in Norway fuels the country's economy and is accompanied by a rise in the Norwegian labour movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels publish <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>. ♦ Crop failures in Ireland and across Europe promote political and economic unrest.
1850s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ <i>The District Governor's Daughter</i> by Camilla Collett, a Norwegian writer and women's rights campaigner, is the first modern novel in Norwegian. ♦ The first railway line is laid in Norway, running between Christiania and Eidsvoll. <p>1859 HEDDA GABLER BORN.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ The Great Exhibition is held in London. ♦ Florence Nightingale revolutionizes nursing. ♦ Gustav Flaubert writes <i>Madame Bovary</i>. ♦ John Stuart Mill writes his <i>Essay on Liberty</i>. ♦ Darwin publishes <i>The Origin of Species</i>.
1860s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Carl XV becomes king of Norway & Sweden. ♦ Denmark annexes the Northern German province of Schleswig. ♦ Austria and Prussia protest Denmark's presence in Schleswig; Prussia invades Denmark. Many Norwegians, inc. Ibsen, express outrage at Sweden's neutrality. ♦ Edvard Grieg composes the first of ten musical collections, <i>Lyrical Pieces</i>, rooted in the Norwegian folk music tradition. <p>1866 HEDDA GABLER GOES TO SCHOOL. 1868 HEDDA GABLER MEETS THEA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Ibsen's friend Georg Brandes translates <i>On the Subjection of Women</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ American Civil War begins (finishes 1865). ♦ Otto von Bismarck Prime Minister of Prussia. ♦ Karl Marx dedicates <i>Das Kapital</i> to Darwin. ♦ Mrs Beeton's <i>The Book of Household Management</i> gives advice on how to be the perfect housewife. ♦ British women gain the right to train and practise as doctors. ♦ British women gain the right to go to university. ♦ Emancipation of the serfs in Russia. ♦ John Stuart Mill writes <i>On the Subjection of Women</i>.
1870s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Oscar II becomes King of Norway <p>1878 HEDDA GABLER JOINS SOCIETY. SHE IS AN INSTANT HIT WITH MANY ADMIRERS. SHE CAN OFTEN BE SEEN RIDING OUT WITH HER FATHER - A FEATHER IN HER HAT.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Friedrich Nietzsche <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i>. ♦ Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone. ♦ Emile Zola's <i>Thérèse Raquin</i>, first naturalistic play, is produced in Paris. ♦ Leo Tolstoy writes <i>Anna Karenina</i>.
1880s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Women admitted to the University. ♦ Popular demand for greater autonomy from the Swedish crown causes political unrest . ♦ The Norwegian Women's Movement Association is founded. ♦ Norwegian writer Amalie Skram publishes <i>Constance Ring</i>, about an unhappy marriage. <p>1888 HEDDA GABLER TURNS 30. GENERAL GABLER DIES. HE LEAVES BIG DEBTS. AFTER A SUITABLE PERIOD OF MOURNING, HEDDA ALLOWS TESMAN TO ESCORT HER HOME FROM DANCES. TESMAN PROPOSES TO HEDDA.</p> <p>1889 TESMAN & HEDDA ARE MARRIED IN THE SPRING. THEY DEPART ON A 6 MONTH HONEYMOON. TESMAN AND HEDDA RETURN TO CHRISTIANIA IN SEPTEMBER. HEDDA TESMAN COMMITS SUICIDE TWO DAYS AFTER RETURNING FROM HER EUROPEAN TOUR.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Friedrich Nietzsche proclaims that "God is dead" in <i>Thus Spake Zarathustra</i>. ♦ André Antoine founds the Théâtre Libre in Paris. ♦ August Strindberg writes <i>Miss Julie</i>. ♦ Edvard Munch paints <i>The Scream</i>. ♦ The Married Women's Property Act is passed in Britain giving women the right to own property in their own right after marriage. ♦ Laura Keiler, whose life inspired Ibsen as he wrote <i>A Doll's House</i>, publishes a play called <i>Men of Honour</i>. <div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Using the script, fill in the BACK STORIES about the other characters. Which events might have influenced their lives and their decisions? How could you use these as an actor preparing a role?</p> </div>

'HEDDA'S DESPAIR IS A BELIEF THAT LIFE OFFERS SO MANY CHANCES FOR HAPPINESS, BUT THAT SHE CAN'T CATCH HOLD OF ANY OF THEM. IT IS THE LACK OF A LIFE'S GOAL THAT TORMENTS HER. ... HEDDA FEELS HERSELF DEMONICALLY ATTRACTED BY THE TENDENCIES OF THE AGE. BUT SHE LACKS COURAGE. IT ALL REMAINS THEORETICAL AND IDLE FANTASIES. THE PLAY WILL BE ABOUT "THE INSUPERABLE", THE ASPIRATION TO AND STRIVING AFTER SOMETHING THAT DEFIES CONVENTION, GOES AGAINST WHAT IS ACCEPTED INTO CONSCIOUSNESS, - HEDDA'S CONSCIOUSNESS AS WELL.' *

PREPARING A ROLE

Ibsen's writing not only contained revolutionary ideas about life for the audience but also required actors, directors and designers to reconsider how they made theatre.

Ibsen is interested in the psychology of his characters.

Like Freud, he believes that the way we have been brought up and the events of our younger lives have a huge impact on our behaviour as adults. Ibsen's plays focus not only on what people do but also on the sometimes conflicting reasons for why they do it.

Ibsen's plays fits well with the acting methods of Constantin Stanislavski (1863-1938), the great Russian actor and teacher, founder of the Moscow Art Theatre.

- Stanislavski devised and taught a comprehensive method or system of actor training which has since gone on to underpin most Western approaches to actor training.
- The 'method' asks actors to delve deeply into the psychological worlds of their characters, to find the reasons behind their actions (their motivations).
- Knowing why someone is saying or doing something can make a huge difference to the way that an actor performs them.
- Actors make 'choices' about their character when they decide what these motivations are.
- Like both the content and style of Ibsen's plays, Stanislavski's method was perceived as revolutionary.

One of Stanislavski's exercises is to find out the facts or GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES about a character. These can include the simplest of facts: name, who she is married to, whether she is aristocratic, has children, where she lives, who she lives with.

In groups of 4 choose a character on whom you will all work. Ask each person to examine a different part of the play (for example, one act each) and write a list of every fact about the character. Make sure that every scene in the play is being covered, even if the character you are examining is not in it - sometimes other characters provide information.

HOT SEATING Ask the rest of the group to interview you about your character. Only use the facts you know to be true in your answers.

THE TEXT - OPINIONS

Now we know the facts about the character, it is useful to know what the character thinks about himself. In your groups, split the play and look through each scene again. Write two lists.

The first list should include anything that your character says about himself.

The second list should include anything that other characters say about him.

Discuss anything surprising.

Are there any contradictions?

Do other people's opinions of him change during the play?

Is there any one person who has a unique opinion of your character?




Compare your ideas about the characters with others in the group. How do they differ?

Discuss how you came up with your ideas, what did you read into the characters?

REMEMBER: THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT OUR IDEAS ARE ROOTED IN THE THE TEXT ITSELF.

Another way into understanding character is to find out what they want. Using your knowledge from the given circumstances, write down what you think each of these characters likes and dislikes, what they want in the play and what their favourite phrase is. BERTHE, the maid, is done for you as an example

<p>Berthe, Maid to George and Hedda</p> <p>Likes: Gossip, looking after the Tesman family, Aunt Juju</p> <p>Dislikes: Change, strangers</p> <p>Wants: To stay part of the family, look after people and be needed</p> <p>Favourite Phrase: "I'm doing my best....?"</p>	
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These are critical questions which dramatists ask of their main characters when they are writing.

The main character in a play (in this case HEDDA) is called the protagonist. What the protagonist wants, what stops them from getting it, and what they do about it, forms the essential conflict from which drama stems.

Once you've discussed your ideas, you will find that you have a set of choices about the characters.

What do you think makes them tick? How do you think different choices might be played out? Do you think that your choices are different to the ones you've seen in the play?

In small groups rehearse a scene using one interpretation and then repeat the scene using someone else's ideas. How do the characters change?

Now consider each character in relation to the others. How do their likes, dislikes and the things they want influence their relationships?

eg: Hedda doesn't want children but Juju loves them.

- Q: What conflicts can you see between what different characters want?
- Q: What is stopping these characters getting what they want?
- Q: What do they do about it and what happens as a result?

You can liven this activity up by demonstrating the conflicts in improvisations based on the conflicts you identify. Remember conflict doesn't always mean an argument or a fight, especially in a polite nineteenth century context.



Imagine your character carries around one thing with him or her wherever s/he goes.

- What is it?
- (A picture of a loved one? A bible? A gun?)
- How long has she had it?
- Who gave it to her?

Imagine your character is writing a letter to another character in the play before the play begins.

- Who are you writing to?
- What does the letter say?
- How intimate are you?
- Write this imaginary letter.

Imagine your character writes a diary. What would be his diary entry at the end of Act III?

- What is their attitude to Eilert's behaviour?
- Write the diary entry.

If you were to try and update Hedda Gabler to 2005, what kind of a society would you place it in? Who would the characters be - can you imagine them down to the last button or Nike stripe? What would adaptations you would have to make? Which elements of 19th century Norwegian Society resonate directly with our context and which do we need to research to understand fully? (Use pages 10 and 11 to help you).

FURTHER RESEARCH

Unless a role has been written about your own life, every actor has to do some research for each character s/he plays. You might have to research what it was like to get up at 5 o'clock everyday or what it is like to be left at home whilst your husband goes out to work.

- ◆ Write a list of at least 3 things you might be able to research for your part.

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. Ibsen letters

Ibsen recognised that it is the designer's job to create the physical environment in which the play is set and that the merest physical hint is required from the playwright. The rest comes from a mixture of the director's vision, careful research and most importantly the designer's visual imagination.

In fact the process of creating the physical environment is very similar to that of an actor's early research. The designer needs to understand the set as a character. To get a feel for this use the exercises for developing a character to reconstruct the history of the drawing room
What do people say about it? What is their attitude to it? Who feels at home there?
Who is intimidated by it?

Next, you can consider the themes of the play and decide whether or not you want to hint at these in the set or with lights, music or sound effects.

Finally, you need to consider what the set needs to do practically eg: Do doors have to open?
What furniture/props do you need?



WAYS INTO COSTUME DESIGN

In rehearsal Rob Howell invited the actors to use an exercise a bit like hot-seating to draw their ideas about costume. Each of the actors was asked to describe in role what they think they wear - both in terms of modern styling - eg: Eve thought Hedda would wear Prada rather than Country Casuals today - and period dress. Once the character had finished speaking, the other actors also in role, expressed their opinions (from the point of view of their character) about how the hot-seated character dresses. eg: Eve as Hedda thought that Sarah as Berthe looked terrible. Sarah as Berthe felt that Berthe was making a tremendous effort to look smart. Try this exercise in groups of seven, one for each character. Remember not to talk all at once.

'THE CALLING WHICH I INFLEXIBLY BELIEVE AND KNOW THAT GOD HAS GIVEN ME IS THE CALLING WHICH I BELIEVE TO BE THE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A NORWEGIAN, NAMELY, TO WAKE THE PEOPLE AND MAKE THEM THINK BIG'.

IBSEN IN HIS PETITION FOR A LIFE PENSION TO THE KING OF NORWAY AND SWEDEN, 1866



THE DISCUSSION OF IBSEN AT SOCIETY DINNER PARTIES WAS DISCOURAGED, EVEN TO THE POINT WHERE A BAN OF THE SUBJECT WAS ACTUALLY PRINTED ON INVITATION CARDS.

"Everything that I have written is most minutely connected with what I have lived through, if not personally experienced; every new work has had for me the object of serving as a process of spiritual liberation and catharsis; for every man shares the responsibility and the guilt of the society to which he belongs. That is why I once inscribed in a copy of one of my books the following dedicatory lines: 'To live is to war with trolls in heart and soul. To write is to sit in judgement on oneself.' "

Ibsen had a profound effect on the drama both of his own time and in the twentieth century. His plays stimulated the avant-garde theatre in Germany and France, and only the plays of George Bernard Shaw had a greater impact in Britain.

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 could not, for example, convincingly present the natural dialogue of Ibsen's later plays, with its sentence fragments, exclamations, and short statements. Naturalistic dialogue is commonplace in plays, films and on television today. We take it for granted; however, in Ibsen's day it was an innovation which confused and upset theatre-goers.

Henrik Johan Ibsen was born in 1828 in Skien, a small town on the coast of Norway. His father was a merchant whose business failed, forcing the family to move to a farm in Gjerpen. At the age of sixteen Henrik was apprenticed to a pharmacist in Grimstad and two years later was compelled to begin supporting his illegitimate child born to a servant girl. In 1850, he moved to Christiania (now Oslo) where he studied and earned a little from journalistic writings. In the same year he wrote two plays, *Catiline* and *The Burial Mound*. Ibsen had hoped to become a physician but, after failing university entrance examinations, was appointed in 1851 as 'stage poet' of Den Nationale Scene, a small theatre in Bergen. There he wrote four plays based on Norwegian folklore and history which failed to attract an audience. In 1852, the theatre sent him on a study tour to Denmark and Germany and in 1857, after the theatre went bankrupt, he returned to Christiania to become Artistic Director of the new Norske (Norwegian) Theatre.

In 1858, he married Suzannah Thoresen, the stepchild of the novelist Magdalene Thoresen. Their only child, Sigurd, was born the next year. To this period belong *The Vikings of Helgoland* (1858) and *The Pretenders* (1864), both historical sagas, and *Love's Comedy* (1862), a satire which was produced with some success. In 1864, Ibsen received a grant for foreign travel from the Norwegian government which enabled him to visit Italy and Germany, and in 1864, he settled in Rome where he wrote his great poetic drama *Brand*. This made a reputation for him throughout Europe and earned him a state pension. He visited Stockholm, dined with the King, and later represented Norway at the opening of the Suez Canal. *Brand* was followed by his last play in verse, *Peer Gynt*, written in 1867 and produced in a revised stage version, with incidental music by Grieg, in 1876.

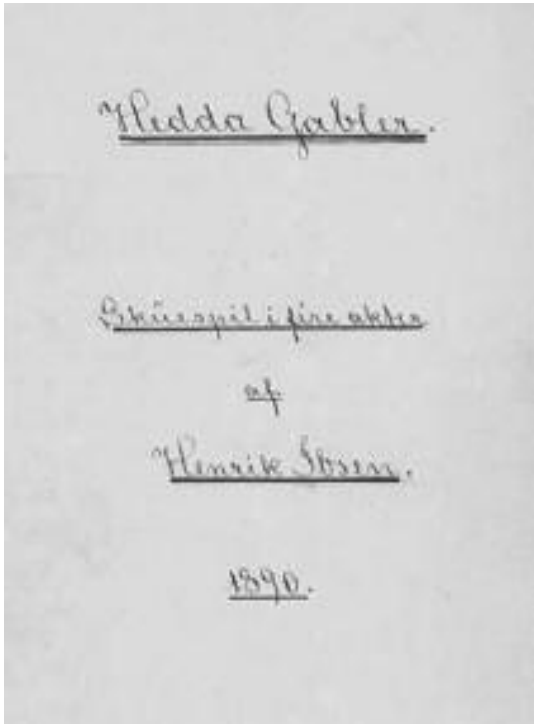
His following four plays are realistic portrayals of ageless and universal parochialism set in the small town life of Ibsen's own day: *Pillars of Society* (1877) is a study of public life based on a lie; *A Doll's House* (1879) of the insidious destruction of domestic life by another lie; *Ghosts* (1881) of the lingering poison in a marriage based on a lie; *An Enemy of the People* (1882) of a man of truth in conflict with the falseness of society.

As well as attacking social conventions as destroyers of life and happiness, *Ghosts* touched on the forbidden subject of hereditary venereal disease. The Daily Telegraph called the play "*an open drain; a loathsome sore unbandaged; a dirty act done publicly; a lazar house with all its doors and windows open.*"

All four plays have the structural economy and simplicity of a skilled writer at the height of his powers and all, in thought and technique, have exercised an immense influence on the development of contemporary theatre. Ibsen's later plays, in which symbolism plays an increasingly large part, include *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Rosmersholm* (1886), *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *The Master Builder* (1892), which is concerned with the dual nature of the man and the artist, *Little Eyolf* (1894), a study of marital relations, *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896), a study of unfulfilled genius in relation to society, and *When We Dead Awaken* (1899), Ibsen's last pronouncement on the artist's relation to life and truth.

The last years of Ibsen's life were clouded by mental illness and he died in Christiania in 1906.

TRANSLATIONS



The first English translation of HEDDA GABLER was by William Archer who translated the plays in 1899. Since then the play has been re-translated many times, and has appeared in many different translations and versions.

Translation isn't simply about converting words: it's about conveying meaning. As our language changes with developments in society, so new translations can give a play a more contemporary feel.

Often, when producing well-known classic plays like HEDDA GABLER, a theatre will commission a new translation from a playwright who they feel will bring something new to the text.

A translator might be a playwright or a professional translator with a specialism in a particular language.

Sometimes a translator will be employed to take the play and its language into a different context (Frank McGuinness, for example, gives Ibsen's plays an Irish feel, or another writer might set the play elsewhere).

VERSIONS

A translation is usually taken directly from the original language but many talented playwrights and translators do not speak the original language. In this case a literal translation is commissioned from someone who can render the meaning without worrying about dramatic or poetic language. A literal translation is a word for word account of the original text, the writer will then use this to put it into their own language. The literal translator may also supply contextual detail which will help the version writer make their decisions when creating the performance text. A new version is not necessarily a completely new translation, but with a new version the text has been changed by the version writer especially for the production. This may mean some re-translation, it may also mean some changes to the text itself: lines being removed for example, scenes being reshaped.

THE CURRENT PRODUCTION

In 2004, Richard Eyre, former director of the National Theatre and who recently directed the acclaimed musical adaptation of *Mary Poppins* in the West End, approached Michael Attenborough, the Almeida's Artistic Director, with his proposal for a new version of *Hedda Gabler* with Eve Best in the title role. Michael didn't hesitate because he was excited by the idea of one of the best theatre directors creating his own version of this powerful classic with one of 'the brightest lights of her generation'.

Richard commissioned a literal translation of the Norwegian text and used that as the basis for his English-language version. Aware that he was already working at one remove linguistically, his intention was to find out what the characters would say in English (see Ibsen's note on writing on page 14) and to copy as far as possible the original cadences of their voices by referring to the Norwegian original. During the early rehearsals he made adjustments to the language once he could hear how it sounded in the actors' mouths.

You can find the first translation of Hedda by William Archer in 1899 online: www.gutenberg.org/etext/4093 The others are available through Amazon or try your library:

HEDDA GABLER, (Theatre Classics) Michael Meyer (Translator)

HEDDA GABLER, Christopher Hampton (Translator) (1989)

FOUR MAJOR PLAYS: A DOLL'S HOUSE, GHOSTS, HEDDA GABLER and The MASTER BUILDER (Oxford World's Classics) James McFarlane (Translator), Jens Arup (Translator) (1998)

HEDDA GABLER, version by Andrew Upton (2004)

HEDDA GABLER (Nick Hern Books) version by Richard Eyre (2005)



IBSEN'S LANGUAGE

The language must sound natural and the mode of expression must be distinctive for every character in the play; one human being does not express himself like another...The effect of the play depends greatly on the audience feeling that they are listening to something that is actually happening in real life.(Letter, 1883)

Ibsen is among the first playwrights to write as people speak. There are no long impassioned speeches or speeches of a polemical type (where the character expresses one side of an argument and another character puts their side rather like a debate). Instead, Ibsen copies the rhythms and vocabulary used by the people he saw around him. The character of Hedda is based on a real young woman he met in Austria. Ibsen introduces naturalistic language to the stage: broken syntax, hesitations, incomplete sentences, characters overlapping each other and cutting each other off.

In Richard Eyre's version, he has been very careful to respect the original dynamic of the text by paying close attention to how the dialogue is articulated as well as what is said.

'Hedda's resistance to the female roles of muse and mother is characteristic of her consistent rebellion against the conventional turn-of-the-century view of woman's place...epitomized by her unwanted pregnancy; careful analysis of the text reveals that the stage directions describing her gestures of nervousness or suffocation nearly always follow indirect references to her incipient maternity.'

Gail Finney, Women in Modern Drama: Freud Feminism and European Theatre at the Turn of the Century, 1989

IBSEN'S STAGE DIRECTIONS

Ibsen writes very detailed stage directions eg:

HEDDA paces furiously, raising her arms and clenching her fists. She opens the shutters of the french windows and stares out. (Act One)

Ibsen knows that often we express ourselves nonverbally and that we communicate our feelings through our movements and gestures, as much by how we speak as what we say.

When you see the production notice how the characters interact physically.

WORKING WITH TEXT

In two groups, rehearse the two versions of the closing moments of HEDDA GABLER printed on pages 18 and 19.

- ♦ In less than 25 words describe what is happening in the scene.
- ♦ What does each character want?
- ♦ Is there any common ground between characters?
- ♦ Any conflict?
- ♦ What new things do we discover about the characters in the scene?
- ♦ Who gets what they want?
- ♦ How is each character changed?

Before you start work with the scene here are some questions you will find useful

- ♦ Agree what it is you want the audience to remember about the scene.
- ♦ Which new plot point do they need to understand?
- ♦ What kind of atmosphere do you want to create?
- ♦ Are any characters more important than the others in the scene?
- ♦ Which character dominates the scene? Does it change?
- ♦ What do you want the audience to be thinking?
- ♦ Do you want the audience to feel strongly about one character in particular?

Present the scenes to each other. What are the differences between them? How do these differences add to or change the meaning of the play? What impression would the audience take away from each of these endings?

TRANSLATION BY WILLIAM ARCHER 1899

HEDDA goes into the back room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano.

MRS. ELVSTED: *[Starts from her chair.]* Oh--what is that?

TESMAN: *[Runs to the doorway.]* Why, my dearest Hedda--don't play dance-music to-night! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Eilert too!

HEDDA. *[Puts her head out between the curtains.]* And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them.- After this, I will be quiet. *[Closes the curtains again.]*

TESMAN. *[At the writing-table.]* It's not good for her to see us at this distressing work. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted, - you shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's, and then I will come over in the evenings, and we can sit and work there - eh?

HEDDA. *[In the inner room.]* I hear what you are saying, Tesman. But how am I to get through the evenings out here?

TESMAN. *[Turning over the papers.]* Oh, I daresay Judge Brack will be so kind as to look in now and then, even though I am out.

BRACK. *[In the arm-chair, calls out gaily.]* Every blessed evening, with all the pleasure in life, Mrs. Tesman! We shall get on capitally together, we two!

HEDDA. *[Speaking loud and clear.]* Yes, don't you flatter yourself we will, Judge Brack? Now that you are the one cock in the basket -

A shot is heard within. TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED, and BRACK leap to their feet.

TESMAN: Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again.

He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA lies stretched on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries. BERTA enters in alarm from the right.

TESMAN. *[Shrieks to BRACK.]* Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

BRACK. *[Half-fainting in the arm-chair.]* Good God!--people don't do such things.

HEDDA looks at BRACK for a moment and then goes into the back room. There's a silence, then the sound of a wild dance on the piano: Danse Macabre by Saint-Saens. THEA jumps up in irritation.

THEA: Ooooooh what's that!

TESMAN runs to the back room.

TESMAN: Hedda not tonight. Think about Aunt Rena. And Eilert too.

He goes back to the desk and then HEDDA comes back into the room, a hand the doorway.

HEDDA: And what about Aunt Juju? And all the rest of them. From this moment on I'll be silent. Not one word.

HEDDA pauses a moment, looks at them all and then slowly leaves the room. TESMAN settles at the desk.

TESMAN: I think she's upset seeing us doing this gloomy work, don't you? I'll tell you what, you could move into Aunt Juju's and I could come round every evening and we could work there, no?

THEA: That might be best.

HEDDA: *(from the back room)* I can hear you. Every word. What will I do here every evening?

TESMAN: *(passing papers to THEA)* I'm sure the Judge will come to visit you.

BRACK: Oh, it'll be a pleasure. Every evening, we'll have a merry time...

HEDDA: *(from the back room)* Yes, that's what you want, isn't it? To be the cock of the walk -

There's a shot. It's violently loud in the drawing room. They all jump up.

TESMAN: She's playing with those pistols again.

TESMAN runs into the back room. HEDDA is lying over the table, dead. She has shot herself through the head, blown her brains out. Blood is everywhere - the walls, the table, the floor and over the portrait of General Gabler. HEDDA is dead, but her blood pulses out of the wound. THEA screams. BERTHE runs in.

All at once:

TESMAN: (screaming) Hedda! Heddaaa!! (to BRACK) She's shot herself! It's in the head!

THEA: No no no no no! Pleeeeeease no..!

BERTHE: Aaaaah dear God alive!

BRACK: Oh God oh God oh God...

TESMAN stumbles back into the drawing room like a victim of a bomb blast. THEA shrinks from the lifeless body, sobbing. BERTHE uses her apron to staunch the flow of blood from HEDDA'S head and strokes her as if she could bring her comfort. BRACK slumps in the arm-chair, shaking his head.

TESMAN: (murmuring) Amazing...amazing...

BRACK: Oh God... People...don't...do things like that...

ALMEIDA PROJECTS IS EXPLORING EACH OF THE PLAYS IN OUR CURRENT SEASON FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE FEMALE PROTAGONISTS.

THE PROJECT IS CALLED "THIS LITTLE HAND" AFTER A QUOTE FROM LADY MACBETH.

HERE WE FOCUS ON WOMEN IN 19TH CENTURY EUROPE AND PEOPLE'S REACTIONS TO HEDDA.

'It is not surprising that our society, being directly dominated by men, comes to regard Woman, not as an end in herself like Man, but solely as a means of ministering to his appetite. The ideal wife is one who does everything that the ideal husband likes, and nothing else. Now to treat a person as a means instead of an end is to deny that person's right to live. And to be treated as a means to such an end as sexual intercourse with those who deny one's right to live is insufferable to any human being. Woman, if she dares face the fact that she is being so treated, must either loathe herself or else rebel. As a rule, when circumstances enable her to rebel successfully ... she does rebel; but circumstances rarely do. ... The sum of the matter is that unless Woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, and to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself.'

George Bernard Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, 1913

LEGAL STATUS & MARRIAGE

- ♦ The Victorians believe that roles of men and women are ordained by nature and theology. God makes man and woman one in marriage, so the law also makes them one person.
- ♦ The laws in 19th century Europe are based on the idea that women get married and are taken care of by their husbands.
- ♦ 90% of women in Victorian society marry at least once.
- ♦ The pinnacle of all a woman's dreams is supposed to be marriage.
- ♦ If a woman does not find a husband she has failed, and is a burden on her parents.
- ♦ Women cannot sign contracts or make a will unless their husbands also sign them.
- ♦ Until the Married Woman's Property Act in 1882, a married woman's wealth in Britain was the property of her husband.
- ♦ Until 1882, if a woman worked, her earnings belong to her husband.
- ♦ Divorce is very difficult to obtain. The Matrimonial Causes Act 1857 allows men to divorce their wives for adultery but not vice versa.
- ♦ If a woman does get a divorce, her children become the property of her husband who can prevent her from seeing them.

Modern audiences watching HEDDA GABLER might wonder why Hedda has allowed herself to get into a situation which leads to her despair and suicide. While it can be argued that there still isn't full equality between women and men in the UK today (eg: women often are paid significantly less for the same job) we are accustomed to a degree of equality that would have been unheard of a hundred years ago.

SEPARATE SPHERES

- ♦ The notion of separate spheres is a way of living and working based on deeply held beliefs about the importance of the family, the constancy of marriage and woman's innate moral goodness.
- ♦ The private sphere is assigned to the woman.
- ♦ The public sphere of business, commerce and politics to the man.
- ♦ In popular advice literature and domestic novels, as well as in the advertisement columns of magazines and newspapers, domesticity is strongly presented as a female domain.
- ♦ Increasing physical separation of the home and the workplace for many of the professional and commercial classes means that these women lose touch with public life.
- ♦ It is through their duties within the home that women are offered a moral duty and purpose; towards their families, especially their husbands, and only thus towards society as a whole.
- ♦ Women have no influence on public affairs.



VOTES FOR WOMEN

- ♦ Women across the world are not allowed to vote - disenfranchised.
- ♦ They can have no influence on and take no part in the world of politics.
- ♦ It is generally believed that women lack the education, intelligence and ability to make a sensible, trustworthy decision at the ballot box.
- ♦ It is argued that if women are given the vote, they will only vote for the same party as their husbands anyway.

EDUCATION

- ◆ Women have little academic education.
- ◆ Working Class women work from a very young age, middle class women learn skills like sewing and playing the piano.
- ◆ Women can't go to university in Britain until 1869 and even then aren't able to claim full degrees.

'HEDDA SPEAKS OF HOW SHE FELT HERSELF SET ASIDE, BIT BY BIT WHEN HER FATHER WAS NO LONGER IN FAVOUR, AND WHEN HE RESIGNED AND DIED WITHOUT LEAVING HER ANYTHING - IT THEN DAWNED ON HER IN HER BITTERNESS THAT SHE HAD BEEN GROOMED ONLY FOR HIS SAKE. - AND THEN SHE WAS BETWEEN 25 AND 26 ALREADY. SOON TO BECOME AN OLD MAID.' IBSEN'S WORKING NOTES

Motherhood:

- ◆ Since early in the century the role of mother has been idealized.
- ◆ Motherhood is no longer simply a reproductive function, but is imbued with symbolic meaning.
- ◆ Caring for children is assumed to be a duty every woman is suited to and delights in.
- ◆ It is seen as a woman's ultimate achievement.
- ◆ Domesticity and motherhood are portrayed as sufficient emotional fulfilment for women.
- ◆ Women of the middle classes spend more time with their children than their predecessors.

- ◆ They are more likely to breast-feed, to play with and educate their children, and to incorporate them into day-to-day life
- ◆ For a woman not to become a mother means she is liable to be labelled inadequate.
- ◆ The childless single woman is a figure to be pitied. She is often encouraged to find work caring for children - as a governess or a nursery maid.
- ◆ Many women die in childbirth.

THE NEW WOMAN

Max Beerbohm said that the New Woman 'sprang fully armed from Ibsen's brain'. The New Woman was a phrase used at the end of the 19th century to describe women who were pushing against the limits which society imposed on women. Today she might be called a feminist. The New Woman typically valued self-fulfilment and independence rather than the stereotypically feminine ideal of self-sacrifice; believed in legal and sexual equality; often remained single because of the difficulty of combining such equality with marriage; was more open about her sexuality than the 'Old Woman'; was well-educated and read a great deal; had a job; was athletic or otherwise physically vigorous and, accordingly, preferred comfortable clothes (sometimes male attire) to traditional female garb.

IS HEDDA A NEW WOMAN? DOES ANY OF THE OTHER CHARACTERS SHOW ANY SIGN OF BECOMING A NEW WOMAN?

WHAT QUALITIES DO WE NOW EQUATE WITH A NEW MAN?

'HEDDA IS THE QUINTESSENCE OF A LADY IN HER SOCIAL POSITION AND WITH HER PERSONALITY. ONE MARRIES TESMAN, BUT ONE FANTASIZES ABOUT EILERT LOEVBOG. ONE RECLINES IN THE CHAIR, CLOSES ONE'S EYES AND IMAGINES HIS ADVENTURES. HERE IS THE ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE: MRS. ELVSTED "LABOURS FOR HIS MORAL REGENERATION". FOR HEDDA HE IS THE OBJECT OF FRIGHTENING, ALLURING FANTASIES. IN REAL LIFE HE LACKS NERVE FOR SUCH THINGS'.

IBSEN'S WORKING NOTES

'No period in history would be quite right for a woman like Hedda who hungers for an intensity of life which life almost never provides.'

Charles Marowitz, *Sex Wars: Free Adaptations of Ibsen and Strindberg*, 1982

DAUGHTERS, MOTHERS, GRANDMOTHERS

See how society's changes have influenced your life and those of your family.

Consider

- ◆ your education,
- ◆ your rights,
- ◆ your career options,
- ◆ your ambitions,
- ◆ your legal status,
- ◆ your options concerning parenthood.

Ask someone in your parents' generation and your grandparents' generation about these subjects. What are the differences and what has changed to make the differences possible?

IBSEN AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Ibsen was concerned about the social, economic and political situation of women in the society in which he lived. He felt that "men and women don't belong to the same century". But he did not see himself as a campaigner for women's rights or a feminist, despite participating in some direct political action such as signing a petition to give married women a right to ownership of property and family earnings.

I AM NOT A MEMBER OF THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS LEAGUE. WHATEVER I HAVE WRITTEN HAS BEEN WITHOUT ANY CONSCIOUS THOUGHT OF MAKING PROPAGANDA. I HAVE BEEN MORE THE POET AND LESS THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER THAN PEOPLE GENERALLY SEEM INCLINED TO BELIEVE. I ... MUST DISCLAIM THE HONOUR OF HAVING CONSCIOUSLY WORKED FOR THE WOMEN'S CAUSE. I AM NOT EVEN QUITE CLEAR AS TO JUST WHAT THIS WOMEN'S CAUSE REALLY IS. TO ME IT SEEMS A PROBLEM FOR MANKIND IN GENERAL. AND IF YOU READ MY BOOKS CAREFULLY YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THIS. TRUE ENOUGH, IT IS DESIRABLE TO SOLVE THE WOMAN PROBLEM, AMONG OTHERS; BUT THAT HAS NOT BEEN MY WHOLE INTENTION. MY TASK HAS BEEN THE DESCRIPTION OF HUMANITY. ... THE TASK ALWAYS BEFORE MY MIND HAS BEEN TO ADVANCE OUR COUNTRY AND GIVE THE PEOPLE A HIGHER STANDARD. TO OBTAIN THIS, TWO FACTORS ARE OF IMPORTANCE; IT IS FOR THE MOTHERS BY STRENUOUS AND SUSTAINED LABOUR TO AWAKEN A CONSCIOUS FEELING OF CULTURE AND DISCIPLINE. THIS MUST BE CREATED IN MEN BEFORE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO LIFT THE PEOPLE TO A HIGHER PLANE. IT IS THE WOMEN WHO ARE TO SOLVE THE SOCIAL PROBLEM, BUT THEY MUST DO SO AS MOTHERS. AND ONLY AS SUCH CAN THEY DO IT. HERE LIES A GREAT TASK FOR WOMEN.'

(speech to the Norwegian Society for Women's Rights 1898)

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF MORAL LAWS, TWO KINDS OF CONSCIENCE, ONE FOR MEN AND ONE, QUITE DIFFERENT, FOR WOMEN. THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER; BUT IN PRACTICAL LIFE, WOMAN IS JUDGED BY MASCULINE LAW, AS THOUGH SHE WEREN'T A WOMAN BUT A MAN...A WOMAN CANNOT BE HERSELF IN MODERN SOCIETY. IT IS AN EXCLUSIVELY MALE SOCIETY, WITH LAWS MADE BY MEN AND WITH PROSECUTORS AND JUDGES WHO ASSESS FEMININE CONDUCT FROM A MASCULINE STANDPOINT.

(FIRST NOTES FOR A DOLL'S HOUSE 1878)



The Dance of Life by Ibsen's Norwegian contemporary Edvard Munch sums up the three stages of a woman's life: youth, marriage and widowhood.

LOVER:

As a young man, Ibsen spent six years in Grimstad working hard at chemist's shop. In his spare time he flouted social conventions and engaged in practical jokes, drunkenness, gambling and sex. In 1846, at the age of eighteen, he fathered a child by a twenty-eight-year-old housemaid in his employer's home. While he was required to contribute financially to his son's schooling until the boy was eighteen, he had no contact with his child, at that time or later. Little is known about his servant-lover.



CAMILLA COLLETT

FRIEND:

Ibsen was a friend of the Norwegian feminist Camilla Collett. Collett was a Norwegian writer, who has been commonly called the first Norwegian feminist. Born in 1813, her books include *The District Governor's Daughter* (which deals with forced marriages and women's rights), *In the Long Nights* and *From the Camp of the Mute* (which explores the ways in which women are depicted in literature.) Collett was the sister of the poet Henrik Wergeland and the lover of J. S. Welhaven, his rival. She devoted her life and work to the emotional and social emancipation of women and is considered to be one of the most influential women critics.

WIFE:

Ibsen met his wife in early 1856. Her name was Suzannah Thoresen. She was one of the first 'liberated women', and the step-daughter of the writer Magdelene Thoresen. The couple were married on 18th June 1858, and had a son, Sigurd, in 1859. Sigurd and Suzannah devoted themselves to Ibsen's wellbeing, but in the 1890s their relationship hit a rocky patch, when Ibsen (now in his 60s) had a series of 'friendships' with young women. These included the pianist Hildur Andersen, who Ibsen spent time with when Suzannah was abroad recovering from illness. He later gave her a diamond ring as a symbol of their union and wrote to her after his wife returned home from Italy. Ibsen and his wife unsurprisingly had marital problems at this time and he discussed his marriage with an old friend Elise Auber. According to Halvdan Koht, "[Ibsen] was clearly disturbed about his own marriage and spoke to Mrs. Auber about it. He had many conflicts with his wife at this time, and on occasion his anger was so extreme that he threatened to leave her. These outbursts were only momentary, and he knew that they would never separate."

PRINCESS

In the summer of 1889, when he was 61, Ibsen was on holiday in a South Tyrolean village. He met an 18 year old Viennese girl called Emilie Bardach and fell in love. He'd dedicated himself to his art like a monk, for "the power and the glory", and he'd renounced spontaneous joy and sexual fulfilment. Emilie became the "May sun of a September life". She asked him to live with her; he at first agreed but, crippled by guilt and fear of scandal (and perhaps impotence as well), put an end to the relationship.

Emilie, like Hedda, was a beautiful, intelligent, spoilt, bored upper-class girl with "a tired look in her mysterious eyes", who wanted to have power and was thrilled at the possibility of snaring someone else's husband. The village in which they met in the Tyrol - Gossensass - was mentioned specifically in an earlier draft of the play when Hedda and Loevborg are looking at the honeymoon photographs in the second act, and fragments of dialogue in Ibsen's notes from the play appear to be derived directly from his conversations with Emilie.

"This longing to commit a madness stays with us throughout our lives. Who has not, when standing with someone by an abyss or high up on a tower, had a sudden impulse to push the other over? And how is it that we hurt those we love although we know that remorse will follow...Our whole being is nothing but a fight against the dark forces within ourselves." Ibsen

VICTORIAN THEATRE - AN INTRODUCTION

1. EARLY VICTORIAN THEATRE WAS A POPULAR FORM, WITH THEATRES BEING SIMILAR TO CINEMAS TODAY. EVERY AREA HAD A THEATRE AND IN THEM PLAYED PANTOMIME, BALLAD OPERA, MELODRAMA, CIRCUS AND BURLESQUE.

2. THEATRE WAS VERY POPULAR WITH THE WORKING CLASSES AND THIS MEANT THAT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PERIOD MIDDLE CLASS AUDIENCES WENT TO THE THEATRE LESS. BY THE MIDDLE OF THE CENTURY, THEATRES BEGAN TO ADDRESS THIS TO TRY AND BRING BACK A HIGHER CLASS OF CUSTOMER BY INTRODUCING CUP AND SAUCER DRAMA, IMPROVING THEATRES, SPECTACLE AND DETAILED PRODUCTIONS.

3. SPECTACLE: NEW TECHNOLOGY AND LIGHTING MEANT THAT PRODUCTIONS BECAME MUCH MORE HIGH TECH.

4. PICTORIAL THEATRE: HIGHLY DETAILED PRODUCTIONS, WITH BEAUTIFUL SETS AND COSTUMES. THE VICTORIANS LOVED HISTORY AND THE EDUCATED CLASSES REALLY WENT FOR THIS LEVEL OF DETAIL.

5. NEW THEATRES: MANY OF THE THEATRES IN THE WEST END STILL HAVE WHAT WAS THE NEW FURNISHING IN THE VICTORIAN PERIOD: MORE PADDED SEATS, LESS BENCHES. THE CHEAPER SEATS WERE MOVED TO THE GALLERIES TO KEEP THE WORKING CLASS SEPARATE FROM THE MIDDLE CLASS AUDIENCE.

6. ACTOR MANAGERS: BOTH MALE AND FEMALE, THESE GREAT LEADERS OF THE THEATRE PRODUCED, ACTED AND DIRECTED PRODUCTIONS IN THE THEATRES THEY ALSO RAN. FAMOUS NAMES INCLUDED: HENRY IRVING, HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE, ELIZA VESTRIS AND CHARLES KEAN.

7. MELODRAMA: THIS FORM OF THEATRE STARTED AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY AND LASTED UNTIL THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY. ITS STYLE WAS SHORT DRAMATIC SCENES WITH MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENTS. THE SUBJECTS OF MELODRAMA WERE OFTEN SIMPLE MORALITY TALES, SOMETIMES DRAWN FROM NEWS STORIES OF THE TIME, SHOWING GOODIES AND BADDIES. BECAUSE IT WAS SO MUSICAL, IT WASN'T CLASSED AS A PLAY, AND SO THEATRES WHO DIDN'T HAVE A LICENCE TO PRODUCE PLAYS (OFTEN OUTSIDE OF THE WEST END) WERE ABLE TO PRODUCE MELODRAMA INSTEAD.

8. CUP AND SAUCER DRAMA: THIS FORM OF DRAMA BEGAN IN THE LATE 1870S, AND WAS ESPECIALLY POPULAR WITH THE MIDDLE CLASSES. IT IS CHARACTERISED BY PLAYS FOCUSING ON EVERYDAY TALES OF MANNERS AND A DETAILED PORTRAYAL OF REAL LIFE. CUP AND SAUCER DRAMA LED THE WAY FOR THE 'NEW DRAMA.'

9. NEW DRAMA: IBSEN'S PLAYS INFLUENCED THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW DRAMA. NEW DRAMA BEGAN IN THE FINAL YEARS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND DEVELOPED FURTHER IN THE EARLY 20TH. THIS DRAMA REJECTED THE LAVISHNESS OF VICTORIAN THEATRE, AND RATHER THAN THE COMEDIES OF MANNERS OF THE CUP AND SAUCER DRAMA, SHOWED PLAYS DRAMATISING CONTEMPORARY MORAL OR SOCIAL ISSUES.

When Ibsen's work was first produced in London in the late 19th Century the majority of audiences were made up of women.

Producers were nervous of Ibsen's plays, which were seen as controversial 'women's plays', so they put them on in the afternoons, rather than in the evenings. Much like today, work by new writers was tried out in the afternoon slots.

The matinee was one of the few places respectable women could go unaccompanied. As many of the women who could afford to go to theatre didn't work, it was they who went to see the shows rather than men.

'Leisured ladies' and 'matinee girls', as they were known, gathered to eat chocolate, admire each others' hats and provoke alarm amongst male observers about too much education and a relaxation of moral restraint.

It is thought that this presence of women in the audience for this work contributed to the creation of turn of the century feminism which in turn led to the Edwardian Suffragette movement.

HEDDA GABLER was one of the most successful of Ibsen's matinees: it played for a record of six weeks.

Why did women like these plays so much?

- The contemporary, middle-class heroines were recognizable as people in their own world.
- The drama the characters faced wasn't fantasy but domestic struggles against the confines of their own lives and traditional femininity.
- Going to the theatre, you didn't just encounter these new heroines on your own at home but with lots of other women.
- Women felt 'involved' in what they saw: Ibsen's 'fourth wall' realism, ordinary dialogue, and frank discussion of often sexual matters brought with it intimacy.
- Women were inspired by what they saw on stage. This was wonderful for many of them, but also a concern for others in society who worried about the feelings these plays might provoke.

These facts are drawn from the Nineteenth Century Tour on PeopleplayUK. Follow this link:

WWW.PEOPLEPLAYUK.ORG/GUIDED_TOURS/DRAMA_TOUR/19TH_CENTURY/CUP.PHP

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE THEATRE MUSEUM ARCHIVES SEE THE BACK PAGE.

HEDDA GABLER, THE FIRST CHICK FLICK: 'HEDDA IS ALL OF US'

- ♦ Look at some of these contemporary quotes to see what an impact the plays had:

'It was like tasting blood, or some exciting drug, the pleasure was so delightful'. Molly Hughes after her first theatre trip with a female friend and no male escort

'One lady of our acquaintance, married and not noticeably unhappy, said laughing, "Hedda is all of us"' Elizabeth Robbins, Ibsen and the Actress (1928)

'More living creatures than the characters of Ibsen have never been on the stage. His women are at work now in the world, interpreting women to themselves, helping to make the women of the future. He has peopled a whole new world'. Lena Ashwell

- ♦ It seems that many women were encouraged to reassess their own situations through identification with elements of the lives of Ibsen's female characters.
- ♦ Because the heroines protested, each in her own way, against the current situation of women, the performances politicised an audience of previously passive women.
- ♦ Hedda Gabler was not a positive role model but an embodied protest against the strictures and banality of conventional femininity, a figure for the unspoken, unrealised anger of her female spectators.
- ♦ In the Women's Coronation Procession of 1911, over forty thousand women marched through London demanding the right to vote. The most popular contingent in the procession, the Actresses' Franchise League, was led by a woman on horseback. She was dressed as Hedda Gabler.

What do you think the reaction from men was about this?

'One will see at these matinees seats and boxes full of sweet young girls ranging from twelve to sixteen years of age. ... It is enough to make a man burn with shame and indignation to see hundreds of girls sitting in the theatre, and, with open mouths, literally drinking in remarks and conversations to which no young girl in her teens should listen'.

"With the lower class woman, doing as much as a man, in her own way, to earn the family loaf; with the 'young person' of the quite ordinary middle classes, presumably so much brighter, and so much fuller of initiative, than the youth with whom she condescends to consort; with the woman of the upper middle class and of the higher classes giving society half its value and more than half its charm - nay, rising now and again to such heights of intelligence that she can voluntarily put her name to a memorial against the suffrage ever being conferred upon her: with these things so, we do not require Ibsen's tearful argument." *Review of A Doll's House in Academy by Frederic Wedmore*

Exercise: In groups devise one of the following scenes:

A group of women taking tea after seeing Hedda Gabler. What do they talk about? What do they want to do next?

A woman going home and telling her husband about the play she has seen that afternoon. What do you think his reaction is? What does he think of Ibsen? What changes does he notice in his wife? Is he scared?

A group of women discussing the reactions of their husbands/ fathers to their theatre going.

A group of women inspired by Hedda Gabler go marching for their rights. What do they shout?

Some clues:

1. Look at the information about how the staging of Ibsen was different to plays like Melodrama and how that made women feel.
2. Many contemporary male commentators pretended not to understand the attraction the plays had for women. They couldn't understand why women weren't happy being mothers and wives, and so thought that Ibsen was denying them their role: why would women like this?
3. Later on some critics began to get horrified by the women they saw at the matinees. The restlessness and hysteria they saw in the heroines, they also began to note in all women. One condemned the matinee audience as 'unwomanly women' and 'unsexed females'.

Part Two:

In your groups discuss contemporary situations which might have the same effect. What play could you go and see which might make a big difference? What would be the reactions of the world around you? It may not need to be set in the UK, maybe elsewhere in the world. How might the play change the way its audience thinks?

When we watch Hedda Gabler now, is it possible to see that in its time many women saw it as a call to revolution?



This photograph from the 1958 Birmingham Rep production is of June Brown in the role of Hedda. Brown is these days better known for her role as Dot Cotton in EastEnders.

The first production of Hedda Gabler was produced at the Residenz Theater, Munich in January 1891.

On the 10th February the same year, it was produced at the Lessing Theatre in Berlin and then in Copenhagen on 25th February.

On the 26th February it was performed for the first time in Norway in Christiania (now Oslo) with Hedda played by Constance Bruun.

In England, it was two women who produced the first production. Elizabeth Robbins and Marion Lea. Ibsen's work was often produced by actress producers who felt, as Elizabeth Robbins put it, that the plays offered them not only 'vivid pleasure' but 'self-respect'.

WOMEN IN THE VICTORIAN THEATRE

'No dramatist has ever meant so much to the woman of the stage as Henrik Ibsen'. Elizabeth Robbins, Ibsen and the Actress, 1928

It's hard to believe nowadays, but in the Nineteenth Century, women who followed careers on the stage were viewed very poorly by society. By the beginning of the Victorian period, despite there being many examples of great actresses and actor managers, the women who performed on stage were seen as little better than prostitutes.

Despite this, acting was one of the few professions at the time where women were equal to men. Theatre management remained male-dominated but men and women never competed for parts. Backstage in the theatre men never felt threatened by women, and women were able to command the same wages and esteem. However, outside the theatre, an actress's reputation was always resting on thin ice and her financial and social independence had to be kept hidden. Articles and biographies about actresses always stressed how their working subjects combined their careers with the usual roles of mothers and wives.

By the end of the nineteenth century, things had begun to change a little. This was partly due to the popularity of 'polite' drama, introduced to get the middle classes back into the theatres, which was often performed by genteel actresses and soon a group of actresses like Lily Langtry, drawn from society circles, were popular.

IBSEN AND THE NEW DRAMA

Ibsen offered actresses more than respect in terms of the way they were viewed. His plays also offered a new style of acting which gave the profession a new intellectual edge. Those who supported Ibsen (among them the socialist Eleanor Marx, daughter of Karl Marx, and her husband William Aveling, who translated and performed his plays in their drawing room) were excited by what they felt was a 'new drama'. Ibsen's plays were realist and they also had serious political concerns.

Ibsen was one of the playwrights who really changed the world for actresses. Not only did his plays feature strong (and often lead roles) for women, but the way that he wrote enabled actresses to get into the mind of the characters they were playing. Ibsen's plays were topical and current, and in them actresses saw their own lives reflected. The world was being shown not just from the perspective of a male order, but also from a female perspective. Ibsen's support of women's rights and his portrayal of women's struggle in his work soon made him popular with actresses and women's rights groups, in his own country and abroad:

"Actresses were acquiring an intellectual as well as a social respectability. Admittedly, by 1890 this development was in its infancy and concerned a very select (and critically unpopular) minority of the profession, but the association of actresses such as Janet Achurch [who first played Nora in The Doll's House in London] and Elizabeth Robbins with Ibsen... foreshadowed the 'new drama' in the 1890s and early 1900s". Michael Baker, The Rise of the Victorian Actor

Ibsen's plays were not met kindly when they were first produced in England. When *A Doll's House* was premiered at the Novelty Theatre in 1889, Janet Achurch was praised for her performance of Nora but many critics could not reconcile themselves to the play's content: they took very personally the suggestion that women were oppressed by men and thought it totally irrelevant to the experience of women they knew: British women were much happier than Norwegian ones.

But for the actress playing Ibsen, the psychological style of acting it demanded meant that she not only played the part, but was able to enter into a critical discussion of the play itself. For Achurch the part of Nora was an enormous challenge. She calls it 'heavier than that of Hamlet', but her favourite role in over 200.

SELF-RESPECT - ELIZABETH ROBBINS AND IBSEN

Elizabeth Robbins was an American Actress living in London and a contemporary of Janet Achurch. She saw her performance of Nora twice. Achurch's performance 'carried her clean away', and watching what she thought of as 'the most thrillingly done modern play I had ever seen', she began to re-evaluate her own thoughts about the craft of acting. Later, she played the role of Mrs Linden and, although it was a far smaller role, she describes how it changed her perception of the 'function of the actor':

"I despair of giving an idea of what that little part meant, not only of vivid pleasure in working at and playing, but of - what I cannot find any other word for than - SELF-RESPECT. Ibsen was justifying what some of us, with very little encouragement, had blindly believed about the profession of acting."
Elizabeth Robbins, *Ibsen and the Actress*

In Ibsen's play, Robbins saw a *raison d'être* for the actor which moved away from the idea of theatre as merely entertainment and the actress as an individual hired to entertain.

Ibsen's success in London owed a huge debt to actresses. Robbins went on to perform in *Pillars of Society* at the Opéra Comique which was staged by two women, Aimee Beringer and Madge Kendal. From this, she was convinced that Ibsen was writing a new kind of play with real women in it. In 1928, Robbins gave a lecture entitled *Ibsen and the Actress* to the Royal Society of Arts which was subsequently published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf's Hogarth Press. In it she charts her difficult journey to get Ibsen onto the London stage, thwarted by Actor Managers who could see nothing for themselves in Ibsen's plays. It soon became clear to her that only by staging the plays herself, could she act these interesting roles.

When Robbins heard about Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, she made plans to mount the production herself with her friend, the actress Marion Lea (who was to take the part of Thea.) Although fully backed by William Archer (Ibsen's largest supporter in London and translator of *The Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*), she could find no support from London Managements. Finally by bringing down the costs, selling their jewellery and freeing up personal assets, they raised the capital and the play opened on 20th April 1891.

On Hedda Robbins wrote:

'[Hedda] was a bundle of unused possibilities, educated to fear life; too much opportunity to develop her weakness; no opportunity at all to use her powers. ... I had the best of reasons for not trying to mitigate Hedda's corrosive qualities. It was precisely the corrosive action of those qualities on a woman in Hedda's circumstances that made her the great acting opportunity she was - in her revolt against those commonplace surroundings that the bookworm she had married thought so "elegant"; her unashamed selfishness; her scorn of so-called womanly qualities; above all, her strong need to put some meaning into her life, even at the cost of borrowing it, or stealing the meaning out of someone else's. ... It is perhaps curious Ibsen should have known that a good many women have found it possible to get through life by help of the knowledge that they have power to end it rather than accept certain slaveries. Naturally enough, no critic, so far as I know, has ever noticed this governing factor in Hedda's outlook, her consciousness of the one sort of power, anyway - the power of escape.' Ibsen and the Actress, 1928

Robbins continued to stage Ibsen, going on to present *The Master Builder* with Marion Lea several years later. The legacy of Ibsen stayed with her throughout her career.

Ibsen had taught us something we were never to unlearn. The lesson had nothing to do with the New Woman; it had everything to do with our particular business - with the art of acting. Events, after Hedda, emphasised for us the kind of life that stretched in front of the women condemned to the 'hack work' of the stage. That was what we called playing even the best parts in plays selected by the actor manager.... But all that interval after Hedda was secretly filled with waiting for the next Ibsen."
Ibsen and the Actress

Robbins went on to write plays herself and was a member of the Women's Social and Political Union and the Women Writers Suffrage League. She was one of a number of suffragettes who wrote plays as part of their campaign to get the vote. Robbins' play, *Votes for Women!* opened on 9th April, 1907 at the Royal Court, directed by Harley Granville Barker.

SETTING THE SCENE....

The New Drama which was inspired by Ibsen rejected the lavishness of the Victorian stage design and instead promoted real, yet sparse sets. The Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch, was greatly influenced by Ibsen and designed the sets for a 1906 production of the play. Look above at his sketch and note how little furniture there is on stage.

Edvard Munch's stage designs for *Hedda Gabler* (Act I, Scene 4), for a production in 1906



REALISM AND NATURALISM

Ibsen used what we know now as 'fourth wall' realism in his plays, which created a more intimate experience for an audience than earlier theatre forms. Since Ibsen's time, plays and TV have brought the feeling of reality even closer.

But what does it mean? Is it real?

The term REALISM was first used in France in the 1850s to characterize works concerned with representing the world as it is, rather than as it ought to be.

Realistic plays represented or imitated un-heroic contemporary life on stage. They aimed to illustrate the social and domestic problems of everyday life. Actors of these plays spoke and moved naturally within scenery that represented their usual surroundings, which was revolutionary at the time. Actors were directed to stay within the proscenium arch, to address their speeches to one another, and, above all, never to break the illusion of reality by acknowledging applause.

The 19th century European novel is a bastion of realism, but its techniques entered the theatre more gradually.

By the mid 1800s, theatre sets resembling a room with the fourth wall removed began to emerge. Real bread and tea were seen on the London stage in the 1860s.

In 1887, Andre Antoine founded the Theatre Libre in Paris where he produced slice-of-life dramas with authentic settings and props.

Ibsen's first socially realistic play *The Pillars of Society* is regarded as the first work in the realist movement, which spanned thirty years until George Bernard Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* of 1906.

Realistic plays were generally received badly but their impact on theatre has been very powerful. Realism is the dominant style of modern drama.

'How odd it is that people complain that [Ibsen's] plays "have no end" but just leave you where you were, that he gives no solution to the problem he has set you! As if in life things "ended" off either comfortably or uncomfortably. We play our little dramas and comedies and tragedies and farces and then begin it all over again'. Eleanor Marx

NATURALISM is often used to mean the same as realism. Technically, it refers to an extension of realism explored by Emile Zola in the 1870s and 1880s, which was based on science and evolutionary theories. The struggle of the individual to adapt to environment and the Darwinian idea of the survival of the fittest were central concerns of naturalistic drama. Key plays of the movement include *The Power of Darkness* by Tolstoy, *Lower Depths* by Gorky and the mine-town plays of D.H. Lawrence. Such dramas depict working class characters in a hostile environment. By contrast, realistic plays tended to feature characters of the same class as the average theatre audience of the time. In English, the term naturalistic has been replaced by 'kitchen-sink drama'.

INTERVIEW WITH SAM - PLAYWRIGHT AND REALITY TV EDITOR- BY SARAH DICKENSON:

Q: YOU'RE A PLAYWRIGHT BUT YOU'RE ALSO AN EDITOR FOR REALITY TV SHOWS. WHAT SHOWS HAVE YOU WORKED ON?

I've worked on quite a few now. Currently I'm doing Fame Academy, but shows I've also worked on include The Club, Big Brother, Changing Rooms and Back to Reality.

Q: WHEN YOU'RE EDITING REAL LIFE FOOTAGE FOR A TELEVISION PROGRAMME, HOW DO YOU MAKE IT INTO A STORY? ARE THERE CERTAIN PRINCIPLES YOU HAVE TO FOLLOW?

The first thing is, you have to think about the length of the programme and, if it's on ITV where there are commercial breaks, the length of the parts (an hour's programme on ITV is 47 minutes in length excluding the breaks and is split into 4 parts). You have to think: 'how long is the programme and how many things do I need to get in'. This will give you the rough length of every sequence you edit. This means that sometimes you lose quite a lot of the footage, often stuff which is amazing. There's no point including an amazing piece of footage which is three minutes long when you only have three minutes left to finish the whole programme off: so the whole part of that story goes because you haven't time to include it and often, because with reality shows you're working over night and to tight deadlines, you don't have time to cut it.

Ibsen is often praised as one of the first realist dramatists. Is HEDDA GABLER realistic now? Does real mean truthful? Is HEDDA GABLER truthful? Is TV more truthful, because it's more real than theatre?

Q: WHY ELSE WOULD YOU LOSE BITS OF STORY?

Well sometimes you don't use a bit of story because there's an awkward 'in' to them: ie. It's difficult to introduce them and their subject. This will depend on the programme though, and whether or not they have a voice over. If there's a voice over, it can do some of the work for you. IE: *v/o: Sarah and Ben are in the bedroom. Ben's just spilt some paint all over the new carpet but he hasn't told Sarah yet.*

Then the scene follows with Sarah finding out about the spilt paint. If you didn't have a voice over, you would have to use a lot more footage: showing Ben spill the paint, trying to conceal it etc. That would take a lot more time.

REALITY TV - REALISM OR HYPER-REALISM

Different shows have different house rules on this. Fame Academy has voice over all the way through but in Big Brother they only say the time, the location and who's in the room: e.g. 'It's 7.48pm in the Big Brother House, John and Germaine are in the diary room...' This means you don't get the same set up, so you'll have to rely on Dermot or Davina to set it up for you. This all makes a huge difference to how an editor uses the footage to form a story.

I don't misrepresent people: partly because it's wrong, and partly because it's impossible. You can't make people appear like they're not but you can show certain parts of them. You can turn up the volume on aspects of a person's personality. Just as I can make people's skin tone look pinker or darker, I can also, by cutting things in a certain way, make them look happier or sadder. But it has to be there in the footage first of all.

Q: HOW DO YOU CONSTRUCT THE STORIES THEMSELVES?

Well, if you have a long running series, the first principle is often casting. You find a group of core characters who will be interesting and will run up against each other. If you look at Big Brother you will see that there's always a mix of people from different backgrounds, different sizes, different temperaments. Then you have a group of Story Editors whose job it is to watch out for all the reality as it happens. If you've watched a reality show, you'll know that there are cameras everywhere. These people look out for two key things: points of character (ie. John is feeling very sad today); and emotional journeys between two people (ie. Lucy and Ben fall out, stop talking, make up and realise they fancy each other).

You'll then cut these different sorts of footage which the viewers will follow through a programme. You'll have a 'John is sad' sequence, which follows John's sadness at different points. This portrays an emotion, characteristic or mood. Then you'll cut a Lucy and Ben row sequence and try to show an interesting journey between two people. You don't construct it from nothing; you just highlight it and point it out, maybe adding music to compliment what you're trying to say.

You'll also do individual character journeys: in Fame Academy, for example, there's lots of footage of people relating to the tutors, struggling to make the grade. Big Brother is a bit different. The whole way BB works is that nothing happens, you are just focusing on the relationships between people, a bit like living in a shared house and never being allowed to leave. I always think that Big Brother is like *Waiting for Godot*, but you can sell advertising space.

Q: SO ARE REALITY SHOWS REALLY REAL?

It's important to remember that all these programmes wouldn't exist if you weren't sticking a camera on a group of people. You put people into situations, show them trying to do something, give them a chance to learn, chance to win or chance to fail in a way they wouldn't otherwise do unless we were looking at them. The characters are aware but at the same time the emotions are real ones. It's hard to be fake forever if you don't get voted off. People are existing through the gaze of the camera in the same way as characters in plays wouldn't exist unless they were on a stage. The dramatist similarly manipulates what's shown of them but the characters don't have the same awareness. Characters in plays don't have the same pressure of the camera and they have the advantage that they won't get voted off! That said, you could say that Duncan gets voted off in *Macbeth*. I'd love

to see Davina McCall interview Duncan after he's murdered. You could also say that Hamlet, in his soliloquy, spends a lot of time in the Diary Room! It's interesting to note that the diary room in Big Brother does prompt soliloquy. You'll notice that the producers who are talking to the housemates leave huge pauses before they respond. This is to keep the housemate talking: people feel awkward in silences.

Q: SO HOW DO THE SKILLS YOU USE AS AN EDITOR TRANSFER INTO YOUR PLAYWRITING? HAS IT HELPED YOU?

Since I've been editing (I was a playwright before I started working in television) I've become a harder worker. I now know it's not enough to stop at saying 'that's how I thought it should be'. I have to articulate and defend all the choices I make for my characters in terms of my audience. Now I really know why a scene is there, what it's doing structurally. I rewrite a lot and I cut a lot and I'm a lot more ruthless with cutting material than I used to be. The skill is similar: you're telling a story.

Q: WHAT DO YOU THINK THEATRE CAN DO THAT REALITY TV CAN'T DO?

There's every difference between a created story, and a shaped story. Some theatre, of course, is based on real events, but the difference is that the people caught in a stage drama have other things going on, not just wanting to win a competition. The created experience often has more opportunity to really explore some aspect of human character.

Q: WHAT ABOUT EAST ENDERS OR THE OTHER SOAPS, HOW DO THESE DIFFER FROM THE REALITY WORK?

Well East Enders is different. It has storyline editors and writers, people whose job it is to trace characters and write them. East Enders is authorship. Big Brother or Fame Academy is more like journalism: you're following people and you don't know what's going to happen. You essentially can't predict the journeys.

Q: FINALLY, WHICH DO YOU LIKE DOING THE BEST?

Writing, beyond a shadow of a doubt. Editing is easy once you know how and there is pleasure in it: you go home every day having worked very hard but also having achieved something. When I'm writing I get quite grumpy if, after a day's work I've not achieved anything. That said, when I've finished a day on Fame Academy, I leave the people at work. The characters I am writing are with me all the time and it's a wonderful thing to have them there in your head, creating and shaping them.

A HUNDRED YEARS OF HEDDAS.... SELECTED PERFORMANCES

'Hedda should undoubtedly be played by Miss Bruun, whom I trust will take pains to express the demoniacal basis of the character.'

Henrik Ibsen, letter to Hans Schröder, head of the Christiania Theatre, 1890

Eleanora Duse (1858-1924). The Italian stage actress Eleanora Duse is considered one of the greatest performers of tragedy. Madame Duse's reputation as an actress was founded less on her "creations" than on her magnificent individuality.

In contrast to the great French actresses she avoided all "make-up"; her art depended on intense naturalness rather than on stage effect, sympathetic force or poignant intellectuality rather than the theatrical emotionalism of the French tradition.



Eleanora Duse as Hedda 1904-08

Both Eleanora Duse in the 1905 London production and Eva Le Gallienne in the 1928 Broadway production stressed Hedda's loneliness and isolation, portraying her as the victim of an indifferent bourgeois society.



Elizabeth Robbins as Hedda (see page 27)

'[Hedda] was a bundle of unused possibilities, educated to fear life; too much opportunity to develop her weakness; no opportunity at all to use her powers.'

The Russian-born actress Alla Nazimova (who had studied with Stanislavsky at the Moscow Art Theatre) emphasized Hedda's demonic, smouldering sexuality. When she reprised the role in her sixties, she played Hedda as an older woman married to a significantly younger man.

Mrs. Patrick Campbell, the actress beloved of George Bernard Shaw, underscored Hedda's frustrations and her desire to "live the life of a man:" she began each performance with a short improvised scene in which Hedda fired her gun at various members of the audience.



Ingrid Bergman as Hedda

Ingrid Bergman, the Swedish actress and film star, played Hedda on stage in 1962 and then again on Television in 1963.

Maggie Smith As Hedda, 1970

The Sunday Times: "When she nearly tore out Mrs Elvsted's hair, I jumped out of my seat."

"Mr Bergman discovers the real secret of Ibsen lies not in his views, or in the cause he ostensibly champions, but in his metaphors."

The Daily Mail's Peter Lewis disliked the "mesmeric effect of watching insect life under glass", and felt that Smith's habit of "looking at her white, predatory mask of a face in the mirror" made her performance "too self-regarding to be either believable or touching, let alone tragic".

Smith wasn't altogether happy with the reviews. She told the Evening Standard: "I wish a woman could review the play. She would understand about Hedda."



"Previous performances make us have dangerous misconceptions about so many of these heroines. ... when we did Hedda Gabler ... we discovered that the essence of Hedda was that she was a coward, a weak woman. We had to break through 100 years of performance history and the desire of so many actresses to play strong female roles.

Deborah Warner and Fiona Shaw on their production of Hedda Gabler in 1993

Cate Blanchett as Hedda, in a Sydney Theatre Company production (2004).

Blanchett's sensuality, presence, wit and vocal command are such that the complexity and startling paradoxes of Hedda - the anger and the ennui, the desperation and the desire, the affection and contempt - become completely natural and fascinating to behold.



"Richard [Eyre] said he always understood her... I didn't at all. ... I wrote a list of all the words you could use to describe her... she's a will o' the wisp."

Eve Best in interview 2005

ALMEIDA

PROJECTS



The Projects work at the Almeida Theatre was launched in September 2003.

Since then we have created:

2003 - 2004

ID - two devised pieces of theatre with year 11 students from Highbury Grove inspired by the production of ID by Antony Sher;

Imagin'd Wings - a Shakespeare Project for year 7s at Islington Arts and Media School;

Celebration - four short original plays inspired by Festen adapted for stage by David Eldridge with 43 young playwrights from Islington Green, Holloway and Highbury Grove Schools which were presented by professional actors at the Almeida;

The Many Colours Design Project with boys from the Learning Support Centre at Islington Arts and Media School;

Discovery Workshops at the Almeida - over 100 students from Islington Arts and Media and Highbury Grove have taken part in a hands-on exploratory workshop of the Almeida Theatre building itself;

Onstage workshops - students from City and Islington College have explored and developed stage craft skills on the Almeida stage;

PUSH AHEAD - support workshops for our resident company PUSH with elders groups and students from Highbury Grove and Islington Arts and Media School;

2004 - 2005

Brighton Rock - Pier Pressure Project - Working with Highbury Grove School we produced a piece of Musical Drama based on the Almeida's Production. Almeida Projects and Freshstart joined forces to run a series of workshops based on the production;

Darwin - Science and English Collaboration with Islington Arts and Media School;

Macbeth Workshops - Over 1000 students from all over the UK attended performances and took part in our workshop programme.



Almeida Angels Theatre Newsletter brings you Almeida news for young people written by young people. There is an edition to accompany each production at the theatre containing reviews, interviews and our famous SPOTTED!!! feature.

If you are aged between 14-18 or know somebody who might be interested then email almeidaangels@almeida.co.uk with your postal address to subscribe to the newsletter... Watch this space for more news on the Almeida Angels.

Almeida Angels is a Freshstart and Almeida Collaboration.

ALMEIDA PROJECTS

www.almeidaprojects.co.uk

New for 2005, we have launched a new interactive area of the Almeida online at www.almeidaprojects.co.uk:

- ♦ Almeida**projects.co.uk** encourages collaboration between young artists from school and youth groups across Islington with professional theatre artists currently working with the Almeida Theatre.
- ♦ Almeida**projects.co.uk** provides an exhibition space for the work created in the residencies and workshops which anyone visiting the site can view long after the work itself has been realised.
- ♦ Almeida**projects.co.uk** aims to become an exciting and practical resource to students of theatre of all ages with a range of information about the Almeida and our creative processes.

EXPLORE...

Click through to www.almeidaprojects.co.uk to find:

- ♦ updates about our current projects;
- ♦ e-galleries containing images from rehearsals and workshops;
- ♦ e-scripts containing drafts for scenes, plays and other original work;
- ♦ workshop diaries charting the progress of residencies and featuring exercises and ideas for workshops;
- ♦ a member-only forum where participants can communicate with each other and their mentor artists;
- ♦ information about the Almeida Theatre - building, staff and the work we make.

Join the debate!

The Theatre Museum - the National Museum of the Performing Arts - is in the heart of London's Theatreland. The Museum's Education Department has been running its highly successful workshop programme since 1987 and over 20,000 students a year experience working with one of our team of 30 professional artists.

Over 40 workshops on all aspects of the performing arts are currently available for students of all ages. Our unique archives and collections, covering over 400 years, provide students with insights into the legacy and continuing influence of performance and practitioners.

For more information on the Museum, and to download a free copy of the current Education brochure, visit www.theatremuseum.org.uk



Getting to the Almeida Theatre TRANSPORT

Tube: Highbury and Islington (Victoria Line, North London Line)
Angel (Northern Line)

Bus: 4, 19, 30, 43 (Upper Street) 38, 73, 171 (Islington Green) 271, 277 (Highbury Corner)

Car Parking: Limited on-street parking on Almeida Street after 6.30pm Monday to Friday, after 1.30pm Saturday. Nearest Car Park 5 minutes walk at the Business Design Centre





Hydro announces sponsorship of 'Hedda Gabler' at the Almeida Theatre.

The Almeida is pleased to announce that Hydro will become Production Sponsors of Henrik Ibsen's Hedda Gabler.

Hydro previously sponsored Ibsen's 'Lady from the Sea'; the inaugural production at the Almeida's newly refurbished home in May 2003.

Hydro is a Fortune 500 energy and aluminium supplier operating in more than 40 countries. Hydro is a leading offshore producer of oil and gas, the world's third-largest aluminium supplier and a leader in the development of renewable energy sources.

Eivind Reiten, CEO of Hydro said: "Our second production sponsorship at the Almeida is a result of the successful experience we enjoyed in 2003. It is a great pleasure to be associated with the Almeida, which has such a strong reputation both in the UK and internationally. Ibsen is one of our country's best loved playwrights and as Norway's largest industrial company, it is exciting for us to be involved with such a high profile production in the centenary year of both our company and our country.

Rick Haythornthwaite, Chair of the Almeida's Board of Trustees said: I am delighted to welcome Hydro back to the Almeida as production sponsors of 'Hedda Gabler'. Thanks to the generosity of Corporate Sponsors like Hydro, Michael Attenborough's plans have continued to surprise, inspire and entertain - and have continued the Almeida's fine tradition for outstanding work.

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For more information on how to become an Almeida Projects' supporter, please email: kholmes@almeida.co.uk

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Further information from Adrian Deakes at the Theatre Museum.