

ABSTRACT

Opening the Door: A Director's Approach to Ingmar Bergman's *Nora*

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In 1981, Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman radically adapted Henrik Ibsen's classic stageplay *A Doll's House* in order to create his own theatrical work, *Nora*. Through cutting much of Ibsen's text and many of his characters, Bergman focused his adaptation on the figure of Nora Helmer, a naïve 19th-century wife and mother desperately trying to avoid the consequences of her past actions. This thesis examines the process undertaken in bringing Bergman's play to its November 2015 performance run at Baylor University, with explorations of playwright and playscript histories, of directorial analysis and production concepts, and the creative collaborations established between director, designers, and actors.

Opening the Door: A Director's Approach to Ingmar Bergman's *Nora*

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To Finnegan—
Being your father is my favorite role yet.

CHAPTER ONE

The Playwright and Play

Introduction

Ingmar Bergman is so recognizable as perhaps one of the greatest *auteur* filmmakers of the twentieth century that his even more prolific career in the theatre is often considered to be of secondary importance. However, Bergman once claimed that “between my job at the theater and my job in the film studio it has always been a very short step indeed.”¹ Leif Zern, one of Bergman’s most prominent critics, once observed that “no other film director after the breakthrough of the sound film has been so influenced by the theatre.”² Bergman’s work in the two media remained intertwined until 2003, when he directed both his last film, *Saraband*, and his final theatrical production, Henrik Ibsen’s *Ghosts*. Thus, Bergman the filmmaker cannot, and should not, be considered in isolation from Bergman the theatremaker.

While film allowed Bergman to exercise his independence, the theatre required him to function as a collaborator. In Scandinavian playwrights August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen, the Swedish Bergman found kindred spirits to whose work he often returned. Over time, however, Bergman’s iconoclastic nature began to affect his theatrical endeavors. One of the most notable examples of this was in 1981 when

¹ Ingmar Bergman, qtd. in Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, and Jonas Sima, *Bergman on Bergman* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1973), 99.

² Leif Zern, qtd. in Birgitta Steene, *Ingmar Bergman: A Reference Guide* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 714. Original text in Zern, *Se Bergman [See Bergman]* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1993), 59.

Bergman adapted the text of Ibsen's classic play *A Doll's House* in order to create his own play, *Nora*.³

This thesis considers *Nora* in terms of Bergman's adapted script, Ibsen's source text, and the theatrical performance they inspired at Baylor University Theatre. This is accomplished in part through application of the field of adaptation theory, coupled with historical appreciation for the work of Ibsen and Strindberg. This thesis seeks to explore the process undergone by director and collaborators in pursuit of a unified, entertaining, and artistic presentation of Bergman's work for the Baylor community.

The following chapter will give careful consideration to the interplay between Bergman's theatrical and cinematic body of work, his childhood inspirations, and the means by which they contributed to the creation of *Nora*.

Bergman's Biography

Ernst Ingmar Bergman was born in Uppsala, Sweden on Sunday, July 14, 1918. In Swedish folklore, it is believed that a child born on a Sunday is imbued with a uniquely perceptive disposition—a “second sight.” It is fitting then that Bergman, one of the most visionary directors of the twentieth century whose films often blur the lines of fantasy and reality, was a Sunday's child.

Ingmar, as he came to be known, was the second of three children born to Erik and Karin (née Åkerblom) Bergman. Karin worked as a nurse before getting married,

³ What to call Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play has sparked many debates. The original Norwegian title is *Et Dukkehjem* (“a doll home”), a word that Ibsen coined specifically to describe the world of the play. Even today, *dukkehjem* is only used in Norwegian for the title of his drama, not to describe the children's toy. William Archer's 1889 translation—the first into English—used the title *A Doll's House*, setting the trend for others until recently when prominent Ibsen scholars have made the case for the title *A Doll House* to better mirror Ibsen's original. However, English usage has historically favored *A Doll's House*, as did Bergman, so for the purpose of this thesis, I will preserve it.

which allowed her to care for Ingmar during his frequent illnesses as a child. Erik was a respected but stern Lutheran minister, who moved the family from a rural vicarage in Uppsala to take an appointment at the Hedveg Eleanora Church in Stockholm just after Ingmar's birth. Thus, Ingmar and his siblings—his older brother, Dag, and his younger sister, Margareta—grew up both figuratively and literally living in the shadow of their father's church.

As the children of a minister, the Bergman siblings were expected to obey the rules of “a world in which most children were expected to be quiet, silent, and obedient.”⁴ Erik Bergman's conservative religious values were directly reflective of the ecclesiastical social hierarchy that characterized the Sweden of Ingmar's youth. Bergman once recalled his childhood as “a life and death struggle [where] either the parents were broken, or the child was broken.”⁵ Erik was not above using both physical and mental abuse to reign in his children's wild streaks. These beatings instilled in Ingmar a defiant individualism and a nasty temper which plagued both his personal and professional life. A frequent collaborator, Jörn Donner, once observed, “With his friends, with his actors, [Ingmar] has become the father he hated.”⁶

However, along with this authoritarian streak, Ingmar also inherited Erik's interest in technology. The elder Bergman often tried to incorporate visual aids into his sermons for younger parishioners. In hopes of cultivating his childrens' imaginations as he had his congregations', Erik gave a puppet theatre to Ingmar and a cinematograph to

⁴ Steene, *Reference*, 26.

⁵ Lise-Lone Marker and Frederick J. Marker, *Ingmar Bergman: A Life in the Theatre* (Tortonto: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 34.

⁶ Michiko Kakutani, “Ingmar Bergman: Summing up a life in film,” *The New York Times Magazine*, June 26, 1983, 32.

Dag for Christmas 1928. In his autobiography *The Magic Lantern*, Bergman recalls an important deal he struck with his brother:

...[O]n the white gate-legged table was the cinematograph, with its crooked chimney, its beautifully shaped brass lens and its rack for the film loops. I made a swift decision. I woke my brother and proposed a deal. I offered him my hundred tin soldiers in exchange for the cinematograph. As Dag possessed a huge army and was always involved in war games with his friends, an agreement was made to the satisfaction of both parties. The cinematograph was mine.⁷

Bergman decided to hide his kerosene-lit “magic lantern” in a closet where he was placed when disobedient, so film became a private affair. However, the puppet theatre was more visibly kept in the nursery shared by the Bergman children. Thus theatre became a collaborative art, as Ingmar wrote and staged short plays with his sister, Margareta, and her friends.

As he grew older, Bergman turned to his childhood toys as an outlet to hone his skills as a storyteller. His experiments with the cinematograph and puppet theatre morphed from fanciful diversion into an “exorcism through which the frightening shadows of childhood could be controlled.”⁸ Directing his paper puppets became a way of gaining control over his own chaos:

I believe one’s creative drive lies in a complex and ambivalent relationship to the reality one has been forced to accept as a child. One wants to create a reality of one’s own that one can convince other people of, one which in the moment when it is depicted is much, much stronger than the reality one is entangled in the whole time. The prophets, musicians and poets speak to us about realities outside the reality we live in. When I began, I had perhaps, intuitively or instinctively, a great need to create realities outside this reality, other realities which I could master, where I am the initiator.⁹

⁷ Bergman, *The Magic Lantern: An Autobiography*, trans. Joan Tate (New York: Viking Penguin Inc., 1988), 15-16.

⁸ Steene, *Reference*, 33.

⁹ Henrik Sjögren, qtd. in Steene, “I have never pursued a particular program policy’: Ingmar Bergman in the Theatre,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 14.2 (2004): 46. Original text in

Staging these other realities provided young Ingmar a pleasant escape from the harshness of life. Bergman recalled, “To be honest, I think back on my early years with delight and curiosity. My imagination and senses were given nourishment, and I remember nothing dull; in fact, the days and hours kept exploding with wonders, unexpected sights, and magical moments.”¹⁰

In his later work, Bergman returned to using childhood toys as artistic metaphor to help the child triumph in his struggle against adulthood. When reality threatens to offset the balance in Bergman’s film *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), the young protagonist Alexander finds refuge in fantasy with both his puppet theatre and his cinematograph. In 1994, Bergman staged a production of *The Winter’s Tale* in which Mamillius carried around a miniature puppet theatre as if to reinforce Bergman’s vision of the play—where the characters retreat into fantastic make-believe and play-acting in order to overcome the complex psychological reality of the first three acts. The collusion of these elements helped shape the Bergmanesque worldview in which the line between harsh reality and dreamlike illusion was constantly blurred.

Bergman’s Theatrical Work

Bergman’s first experience of live theatre was not an auspicious one. During a production of *Little Red Riding Hood* Bergman saw as a child, the character of the Big Bad Wolf was so frightening that allegedly young Ingmar had to be carried home screaming.¹¹ For this reason, Bergman spent much of his childhood regularly attending

Sjögren, *Lek och raseri [Play and Fury]* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2002), 112.

¹⁰ Bergman, *Magic Lantern*, 13.

¹¹ Steene, *Reference*, 28.

the cinema where the terrors were confined to the screen. Only in the safety of the Bergman nursery did Ingmar feel comfortable enough to revisit the world of the theatre. This type of play was one place where young Ingmar was able to manifest control over his world: “In his work, the theatre—this protected home of dreams—frequently becomes a metaphor for this world of illusions.”¹² However, the scenarios he dreamt up with his paper puppets continued to be dwarfed by the power of film.

At age 13, Bergman came across a volume of collected works by August Strindberg. The burgeoning young theatremaker felt an unprecedented sense of euphoria—as though he discovered a kindred spirit in his fellow Swede. He later recalled that Strindberg “expressed things which I’d experienced and which I couldn’t find words for.”¹³ Bergman began staging Strindberg’s work in his puppet theatre, proclaiming him a new “household god.” When famed Swedish director Olof Molander staged a production of Strindberg’s *A Dream Play* in 1934, the seventeen-year-old Bergman couldn’t resist the chance to see one of his favorites.¹⁴ Bergman remembers this as a “fundamental dramatic experience,” and remembers returning multiples times, where “night after night

¹² Egil Törnqvist, *Between Stage and Screen: Ingmar Bergman Directs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 13.

¹³ Björkman, Manns, Sima, 24.

¹⁴ Bergman recalls a slightly different account in *The Magic Lantern* and his teleplay *After the Rehearsal*. In those, he was twelve when he saw Molander’s production of *A Dream Play*; however, records show that Molander directed it in 1934 when Bergman would have been seventeen. Bergman’s memory has to be taken with a grain of salt, as it often too blurs the line between reality and fantasy.

I stood in the wings and sobbed and never really knew why.”¹⁵ From that point on, anytime Molander staged Strindberg, Bergman was there.

When he was old enough to attend university in 1937, Bergman chose to enroll as a literature major at the University of Stockholm to please his parents. Bergman noted, “I think my parents thought [the desire to be a director] would calm down, once I started at the university. But it did not.”¹⁶ In reality, Bergman’s decision had been influenced by the opportunity to study with Martin Lamm, the most influential Strindberg scholar of the time and head of the university’s literature program. It was during this time that Bergman further developed the practical approach to his craft, if not his scholarship. He wrote a paper for Lamm on Strindberg’s *Keys to Heaven* that “read like a prompt copy for a stage production” rather than an academic essay.¹⁷ While he did not finish his degree, Bergman’s stint at university helped reveal the path to his future. It was shortly thereafter that Bergman got his first chance to put his newly-developed skills to the test.

His directorial debut came at age 20 courtesy of Mäster Olafsgården, a Christian settlement house in Stockholm with an amateur theatre troupe. Not surprising, one of the first productions he staged was a play by Strindberg, *Lucky Per’s Travels*. Working on Strindberg reminded Bergman of his time backstage during Molander’s production of *A Dream Play*. He recalled, “it is the sort of thing you never forget and never leave behind, especially not if you happen to become a director and least of all if you...direct a

¹⁵ Bergman, qtd. in Törnqvist, *Stage and Screen*, 17. Original text in Sjögren, “Dialog med Ingmar Bergman [Dialogue with Ingmar Bergman, *Ingmar Bergman på teatern [Ingmar Bergman on Theatre]* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968), 38.

¹⁶ Bergman, qtd. in Steene, *Reference*, 25. Original text in Jörn Donner, *Tre scener med Ingmar Bergman [Three Scenes with Ingmar Bergman]*, Jörn Donner Productions & Cinematograph (Stockholm: Sveriges Television, January 23, 1976).

¹⁷ Steene, *Reference*, 70.

Strindbergian drama.”¹⁸ At first, Bergman’s productions were marked by a mimicry of the style he saw at work in Molander’s stagings. He showed a preference, like Molander, for clear production concepts, small (if any) interpretative choices, a unification of stage designs and actor tableaux, and an acute sensitivity to the individual rhythms of the play and audience. Over time, however, his own unique style began to emerge, leading many of his fellow Swedes to claim that “[no] other director has heard the Strindberg rhythm as clearly” as Bergman.¹⁹

As his skills grew, so too did his infamous temperament. His frequent use of foul language and demanding rehearsal schedules led a member of Mäster Olafsgården’s board of directors to give Bergman his notorious moniker—“the demon director.” One student actor, Birger Malmsten recalled Bergman directing a play while holding a hammer in his hand, which he would occasionally throw at actors.²⁰ Despite this, Bergman’s methods produced impressive results, earning him the respect of his amateur actors and audiences.

Bergman made his transition from the amateur to the professional stage at the age of twenty-six. He assumed the position of artistic director at the City Theatre of Hälsingborg in 1944, only a few months before his first screenplay *Torment* went into production. The organization took a chance on the young director in large part because it was on the verge of economic collapse. However, Bergman’s presence there proved to be

¹⁸ Sjögren, *on Theatre*, 38.

¹⁹ Marker and Marker, *Ingmar Bergman: A Project for the Theatre* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1999), 16. Later in his life, Bergman bought an apartment in Stockholm built on the spot where Strindberg lived during his time there.

²⁰ Malmsten obviously wasn’t too frightened, as he later became a frequent collaborator in Bergman’s films.

so financially and artistically lucrative that he caught the attention of more prestigious theatres. In 1946, he was offered the opportunity to become a resident director at the larger Gothenburg City Theatre. There, Bergman's raw talents as a director were sharpened under the strict guidance of theatre manager Torsten Hammarén. In 1952, his continued success earned him a position at the well-respected Malmö City Theatre. In 1963, he took on the prestigious duties of Artistic Director of Stockholm's Royal Dramatic Theatre (Dramaten), where he finally was able to work alongside his idol, Olof Molander.²¹

During this time, Bergman established the demanding schedule that would define his career—directing for the stage during the fall through the spring and for film during the summer. Once when asked about the demands of juggling his two passions, Bergman quipped: “The theatre is like a loyal wife, film is a great adventure, the costly and demanding mistress...you worship both, each in its own way.”²² By the time he reached age 40 in 1968, Bergman had been creating at blistering pace, having already directed 24 of his eventual 37 feature films and well over 100 theatrical productions.

However, Bergman's ascendant career came to a halt in January 1976. While in a rehearsal for Strindberg's *Dance of Death* at the Dramaten, Swedish authorities stormed the theatre and arrested the director in front of his cast on charges of tax evasion. Bergman maintained his innocence, but was interrogated for hours in his small office at the theatre while his house was searched. As soon as the charges were dropped, Bergman

²¹ Interestingly enough, the Dramaten is only two blocks from the Hedveg Eleanora Church, where Erik Bergman preached.

²² Peter Cowie, *Ingmar Bergman: A Critical Biography* (New York: Scribner, 1982), 13.

abandoned his theatre and fled to Germany in self-imposed exile, claiming he would never again work in Sweden.

The Bergman Project

While in exile, Bergman found a welcome home at the famed Munich Residenztheater. His time in Germany was fruitful. He produced five plays in as many years in his surrogate theatre. However, by 1981, much of the thrill of his protest against the Swedish government had worn off and Bergman grew homesick. With a stable of actors and a storied theatre at his disposal, the director started to dream of a final project worthy of the company's time and efforts. Originally intended to be his "farewell to Munich," Bergman conceived of a production of unprecedented size and scope that would also serve to reconnect him to his Scandinavian roots.²³ "The Bergman Project," as it would be come to be known, was first designed to be a simultaneous parallel performance of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, August Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, and a staging of Bergman's own film *Scenes from a Marriage* in repertory. For each play, Bergman would serve as both adaptor and director—a reflexive position for the *auteur* filmmaker.

Initially, Bergman denied an underlying reason behind his selection of these three plays: "I haven't intended to use this project to make any specific statements or draw any conclusions."²⁴ This is a common line from Bergman, who often claimed that in his theatrical career : "I have staged what I've felt like doing or what I've been asked to do or

²³ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 5.

²⁴ Ibid, 18.

what I've felt compelled to do. I have never pursued a particular program policy."²⁵

However, when later pressed, Bergman clarified that his Project specifically sought to strengthen the thematic and situational links between the three plays by honing the focus of each to the “two isolated human beings” central to each story—Nora and Torvald, Julie and Jean, and Marianne and Johan.²⁶ To accomplish this, Bergman was required to subject each of the scripts to some degree of revision. In an interview about the process of adapting the plays for his Project, Bergman claimed: “Today, I think you ought never to cut Strindberg—but you should always cut Ibsen.”²⁷ Echoing the reverence he felt for Strindberg in his childhood, Bergman’s preference for the work of his fellow Swede is clear in both practice and theory.²⁸

Thus, it was *A Doll’s House*—the oldest of the three plays—which received the most radical treatment in order to become *Nora*. In order to understand the impacts of these changes, which are not only referenced later in this chapter but inform the analytical focus of *Nora* in Chapter Two, a discussion of Ibsen’s original play is necessary.

²⁵ Steene, ““I have never,” 42.

²⁶ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 5. Strindberg noted that he wrote *Miss Julie* as a character study, as he too was interested in a concentrated focus on the passionate relationship between the two people.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁸ For *Julie*, Bergman actually added back in cuts originally made by Strindberg before publication. Among them the director is said to have fixated on a deleted note that Julie had a scar on her cheek, which amplifies the circumstances around her confession of having been whipped by her former fiancé.

Ibsen and A Doll's House

Unlike other classic forms, like the Greeks and Shakespeare, Ibsen had “no universal legends on which to draw, no common tradition which the playwright and his audience shared.”²⁹ However, he did have something just as potent—real life.

The basic plot of *A Doll's House* is said to have been inspired by an event in the life of one of Ibsen's close friends, Laura Kieler. A fellow writer, Keiler had been inspired by Ibsen's play *Brand* and composed an unofficial sequel. In 1870, she sent him an unpublished manuscript in hopes of securing his recommendation for publication. Ibsen gently refused, thinking he would spare his friend severe embarrassment from forwarding along an incomplete and hastily composed work. Unbeknownst to Ibsen, Keiler needed the money from publication to make outstanding payment on an illegal loan which she had taken out to cure her husband Victor's tuberculosis. With few options at hand, she desperately forged a signature for the money. When the note was denied by her creditor, and the bank refused payment, Laura's forgery was discovered by her husband. Regardless of the fact that she had done it purely for his sake, Victor told her she was unworthy to have charge of their children and had her committed to an asylum. On top of this, he publically demanded a separation so that the children could be removed from her care.³⁰ Feeling partially responsible, Ibsen began work on a dramatic treatment of the situation in order to rectify the monumental disgrace he had helped to bring upon his friend.

²⁹ Edward Murray, *Varieties of Dramatic Structure: A Study of Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 89.

³⁰ For the entire ordeal recounted in much greater detail, see Michael Meyer, *Ibsen: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1971).

The main action of the *A Doll's House* focuses on the seemingly-happy marriage of Nora and Torvald Helmer. After years of scrimping and saving, the Helmers have had a stroke of good luck. Torvald, a former civil servant, has just been hired as director of a prestigious local bank. When the play opens, an old friend of Nora's, Mrs. Linde, has arrived in town in search of work, and Nora sees to it that Torvald gives her a post at the bank. In exchange for this appointment, Torvald is forced to dismiss Nils Krogstad, a disgraced colleague of his, from his post at the bank. Unbeknownst to Torvald, Krogstad is the man from whom Nora had secretly borrowed money eight years prior when Torvald had fallen seriously ill. As security for the loan she forged her dying father's signature. Since then, Nora has been secretly paying back the loan with interest through working odd jobs and squirreling away the small allowances given to her by Torvald.

Upon losing his job, Krogstad goes to Nora, threatening to tell Torvald her secret unless she convinces her husband to reconsider his decision. Nora is in despair but at the same time convinced that in his love for her, Torvald will sacrifice himself and take full responsibility for what she has done, should he learn the truth. Nora considers asking Dr. Rank, an old friend of the family, for the money, but when he declares his love for her, she finds it impossible to approach him. Krogstad returns to offer Nora a deal—if Torvald was to create a position for him at the bank, he would consider the debt paid. Nora rebukes the offer and Krogstad places a letter explaining the details of Nora's loan and forgery in Torvald's locked mailbox.

Upon learning the truth, Torvald reacts with rage and revulsion, without any sign of being willing to accept responsibility for the forgery on his wife's behalf. When Krogstad, prompted by Mrs. Linde, has a change of heart, Torvald immediately forgives

his wife. However, Nora has seen Torvald's true nature, and that her marriage is not as perfect as she previously believed. After a final conversation with Torvald, Nora decides that her most important and only task is to go out into the world on her own to educate herself about life and society. She leaves her husband and children, as the sound of a door slamming shut is heard.

By the time *A Doll's House* premiered in Copenhagen on December 21, 1879, Laura Keiler had already been discharged from the asylum. By the time *A Doll's House* reached the Munich Residenztheater less than a year later in November 1880 (and where, a century later, Bergman's *Nora* would premiere), Laura had returned to her duties as a wife and mother after her husband arranged for her release on the condition she come home to help raise their children. However, Kieler's onstage surrogate, Nora, continued to send shockwaves through audiences each time she slammed the door on her marriage at the play's conclusion.

In his introduction to the published version of the play, under the header *Notes for the Tragedy of Modern Times*, Ibsen famously asserted his belief that "a woman cannot be herself in modern society," as it is "an exclusively male society, with laws made by men and with prosecutors and judges who assess feminine conduct from a masculine standpoint."³¹ Both admirers and critics seized upon these comments as an unabashed confirmation of the pro-feminist leanings of Ibsen and his play.

As such, Ibsen spent the better part of the next decade refusing the mantle of "Prophet of New Womanhood" being thrown at him. On May 26, 1898, in a speech to the Norwegian Women's Rights League, he remarked, "I must disclaim the honor of having

³¹ Henrik Ibsen, "Notes for the Tragedy of Modern Times," in *Ibsen: Four Major Plays Vol. 1*, ed. and trans. Rolf Fjelde (New York: Signet Classics, 1965), xii.

consciously worked for the women's rights movement . . . True enough, it is desirable to solve the problem of women's rights, along with all the others; but that has not been the whole purpose."³² Ibsen always insisted his "whole purpose" was not a feminist one, but a humanist one. Even still, Ibsen's philosophical message was often lost in the furor of embodied performance when *A Doll's House* began being staged elsewhere in Europe.

Adapting Ibsen

By the time "The Bergman Project" premiered on April 29, 1981, after four months of grueling rehearsal, the scope of the director's vision had changed. When the original three show set-up proved impossible for practical reasons, the productions were split up and prepared for presentation in three Munich theatres. But, after being dissatisfied with architectural layout of the third venue—the Cuvilliés Theatre—Bergman settled for having the three plays performed at two different theatres on one street. At the Residenz, the company's main theatre, Bergman staged a double bill of his new versions of Ibsen and Strindberg's works. The nearly four-and-a-half hour production featured his heavily edited and largely reimagined *A Doll's House* (here titled *Nora*) followed after an intermission by his expanded adaptation of *Miss Julie* (shortened to *Julie*).

In order to bridge the gap between the work of Ibsen, Strindberg, and his own, Bergman was required to assume the role of adaptor as well as director. Ultimately, Bergman cut nearly one-third of Ibsen's original text. The result served to achieve Bergman's desire to hone in on the crumbling marriage of Torvald and Nora Helmer, but did so at the expense of excising many of the linking points of Ibsen's realistic plot.

³² Ibsen, qtd. in Evert Sprinchorn, *Ibsen: Letters and Speeches* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 337.

Instead of the carefully plotted three-act structure of *A Doll's House*, Bergman's play features a sequence of fifteen short scenes with no intermission. Bergman also chose to split the Helmers' home into three distinct areas—the parlor, the dining room, and the bedroom—instead of observing the unity of place found in Ibsen's play. The breadth of his excisions also required Bergman to pare down the cast to five characters—completely removing the Helmers' household staff as well as their three children. The remaining characters—Torvald, Krogstad, Mrs. Linde, and Dr. Rank—remained visibly present onstage behind Nora, seated in chairs placed along the back wall of the stage when they were not involved in the dramatic action. For Bergman all of these deletions were acceptable, as they continued to keep the conflict focused on the two figures of Nora and Torvald for the show's unimpeded 90-minute running time.

To this end, reviews have noted that *Nora* has a “seamless continuity and flows, quite surreally, like a dream.”³³ Bergman biographers Frederick and Lise-Lone Marker comment that Bergman's experimentation with *A Doll's House* “became virtually a dreamplay,” calling to mind Strindberg's work of the same name.³⁴ Bergman's production strategies draw parallels to the preface to *A Dream Play*:

In this dream play, the author has...attempted to imitate the inconsequent yet transparently logical shape of a dream. Everything can happen, everything is possible and probable. Time and place do not exist; on an insignificant basis of reality, the imagination spins, weaving new patterns; a mixture of memories, experiences, free fancies, incongruities and improvisations. The characters split, double, multiply, evaporate, condense, disperse, assemble. But one consciousness rules over them all, that of the dreamer; for him there are no secrets, no scruples, no laws. He neither acquits nor condemns, but merely relates the story; and, just

³³ Deirdre Donovan, “Nora & In the Shadow of the Glen,” review of *Nora*, by Ingmar Bergman, as performed by Marvell Repertory Company, New York, *CurtainUp*, February 19, 2011. <http://www.curtainup.com/noraandintheshadowoftheglen.html>

³⁴ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 9.

as a dream is more often painful than happy, so an undertone of melancholy and of pity for all mortal beings accompanies this flickering tale.³⁵

On the whole, “The Bergman Project” was considered to be ambitious, but ultimately unsuccessful. In his review for the prominent German newspaper *Die Zeit*, Helmut Schöd quipped: “Bergman’s trilogy was nothing sensational (rather somewhat of a disappointment)...What the Munich press has called a ‘theatre event’ does not even have the quality of an emergency exit.”³⁶ Some reviewers took umbrage with Bergman’s view of the character of Nora. In *Nora*, the main character’s arc was cut far too drastically, resulting in a thoughtless and selfish final act: “The whole character’s hollowness shines through...She has committed a really stupid thing. She punishes [her husband’s] loving care by leaving him. Her morals are as thoughtless in the end as in earlier scenes.”³⁷ Other critics blamed the production’s bloated length for its failure. Largely though, the mammoth production was simply seen by the Germans as self-indulgent: “There really is no plausible ground for staging Bergman’s spectacle.”³⁸ Schöd’s verdict was even more brutal: “It is clear that [Bergman] has nothing more to say onstage in Munich.”³⁹

³⁵ August Strindberg, *A Dream Play*, trans. Evert Sprinchorn and ed. Jacques Chwat (New York: Avon Books, 1974), 33.

³⁶ Helmut Schöd, qtd. in Steene, *Reference*, 714. Original text in Schöd, “Wo, bitte, geht’s zum Notausgang?” [“Please, where is the emergency exit?”], review of *Nora*, as performed at the Residenztheatre, Munich, *Die Zeit*, May 7, 1981. <http://www.zeit.de/1981/20/wo-bitte-gehts-zum-notausgang/seite-3>

³⁷ Steene, *Reference*, 713.

³⁸ Hans-Thies Lehmann, qtd. in *ibid.*, 714. Original text in Lehmann, “Ibsen, Strindberg, Bergman,” review of *Nora*, as performed at the Residenztheatre, Munich, *Darmstädter Echo*, May 7, 1981.

³⁹ Schöd.

Ibsen scholar Joan Templeton saw Bergman's tamperings as a means to "turn Ibsen into his avowed spiritual father Strindberg."⁴⁰ This claim is not wholly inappropriate, as others saw Bergman's adaptation as an "energetic pursuit of the Strindbergian chamber play."⁴¹ For Strindberg, the chamber play was "intimate in form, [featured] a restricted subject, treated in depth, with few characters, large points of view, no superfluous minor characters, [and] no long-drawn-out whole evenings"—all characteristics found in *Nora*.⁴²

While Templeton's comment was meant to be dismissive, its central idea became crucial for the production concept at Baylor. As discussed further in Chapter Two, Strindberg's influence can be seen explicitly in the treatment of form and character in Bergman's adaptation. For these reasons, *Nora* can best be understood as a combination of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Strindberg's *A Dream Play*.

Revisiting A Doll's House

Upon returning to Sweden in 1985, Bergman restaged his *Julie* at the Dramaten almost immediately. In contrast, it would take him eight-and-a-half years for him to return to Ibsen's story. While his 1989 production is to be considered distinct from *Nora*,

⁴⁰ Joan Templeton, "Updating a Doll House: Bergman, Ostermeier, Kimming, and Breuer," In *Ibsen on the Cusp of the 21st Century: Critical Perspectives*, edited by Pål Bjørby, Alvild Dvergsdal, and Idar Stegane (Laksevåg, Norway: Alvheim and Eide Akademisk Forlag, 2005), 184. Bergman was aware of Strindberg's opinion of the play, calling it "a wonderful analysis."

⁴¹ Vilgot Sjöman, qtd. in Törnqvist, "Bergman's Strindberg," *The Cambridge Companion to Strindberg*, ed. Michael Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 152. Original text in *Dagbok med Ingmar Bergman [Diary of Ingmar Bergman]* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1963), 13.

⁴² Strindberg to Edvard Brandes, *Strindberg's Letters: Volume 2*, ed. and trans. Michael Robinson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 734.

it can perhaps best be viewed as a spiritual successor to the 1981 staging. The lessons Bergman learned in Munich clearly influenced choices he made in Stockholm.

Unlike the mixed reaction in Germany, Bergman's performance methods seemed to connect with his Swedish audience. Leif Zern gushed: "Today I am not going to have any inhibitions, for what Bergman has done with *A Doll's House* is a performance so beautiful, so moving, so incomparably rich that I have to go back to 1969 to find anything similar in his and The Royal Dramatic Theatre's history."⁴³ The consensus agreed Bergman had stayed close to the essence of Ibsen, while managing to cut certain dusty wordings from the text. Others saw a wholly Bergmanesque production, freed from the influence of Ibsen's legacy. One review of the later production in Stockholm production suggests, "When Ingmar Bergman sets up Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, it becomes a production minted more by the director than by the dramatist."⁴⁴

Amongst all of the cuts in *Nora*, one element he added for the Stockholm production stands out—the presence of the Helmers' youngest child, a girl Bergman named "Hilde." Despite his original intent of focusing on Torvald and Nora, Bergman found that the visual absence of the children in his Munich production of *Nora* was a mistake. Reviews of contemporary productions that use Bergman's 1983 script often mention it as well. Reviewing the Belgrade Theatre production in 2012, Quentin Letts noted that not seeing the children "makes it easier to believe Nora's decision at the end of

⁴³ Zern, qtd. in Steene, *Reference*, 714. Original text in Zern, "Fem roller finner en trollkral" ["Five characters and a magician"], review of *Nora*, as presented at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm, *Expressen*, November 18, 1989, 4.

⁴⁴ Kristoffer Leandoer, qtd. in Steene, *Reference*, 714. Original text in Leandoer, "När livet börjar är pjäsen slut" ["When life begins, the play is over"], review of *Nora*, as presented at the Royal Dramatic Theatre, Stockholm, *Aftonbladet*, November 18, 1989.

the story, but it robs the events of some of their humanity.”⁴⁵ In his review of the La Jolla Playhouse production, Don Shirley noted: “The idea of a woman leaving her marriage is no longer as remarkable as it was when Ibsen was writing, but the issue of what to do with the children still remains thorny.”⁴⁶ In a production where Bergman strove to simplify the action, he ended up simplifying his characters as well. With no children involved, *Nora* was just a confrontation between a husband and wife, not the infinitely more complicated battle between father and mother.

In fact, the absence of the child figure from this final moment that may have been the impetus for Bergman to restage *A Doll's House* in the first place. According to Egil Törnqvist, when Bergman saw Nora leave at the end of his Munich production in where there was no child present, his Dramaten production began to take form: “Nora leaves a big and small child behind.”⁴⁷ To rectify this, Bergman began his Stockholm production with Nora reading Hilde a romantic fairy tale about a damsel in distress. The production ended with the Helmers’ daughter appearing onstage, awoken from her slumber by her parents’ shouting, just in time for her mother’s exit. This addition seemed to complete Bergman’s adaptation in a satisfactory way. In a combined rehearsal-press conference interview for the production, Bergman stressed the importance of Hilde as a tragic figure in a collapsing marriage—a common trope found in Bergman’s cinematic work.

⁴⁵ Quentin Letts, “Here’s a good return on your interest as Nora repays its debt to Ibsen,” review of *Nora*, as performed by Belgrade Theatre, London, *Daily Mail*, February 2, 2012. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/reviews/article-2095775/Nora-review-Heres-good-return-interest.html>.

⁴⁶ Don Shirley, “Bergman Adaptation Restructures *A Doll's House*,” review of *Nora*, as performed at La Jolla Playhouse, San Diego, *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1998. <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/may/26/entertainment/ca-53435>

⁴⁷ Törnqvist, “Ingmar Bergman’s Doll’s Houses,” *Scandivanica* 30.1 (1991): 74.

Children in Bergman's Work

Children appear only occasionally in Bergman's films, and often when they are present, they often remain in the background as decorative but silent extras. Film theoretician Robert Stam suggests that by including these figures, Bergman embedded "spectator allegories" in his films. This notion refers to an event in both written fiction and films, "in which an artistic representation is brought to a halt by the naïve intervention of a personage who confounds reality with spectacle."⁴⁸ Thus, Bergman's identification with children is not merely metaphorical; the world is often literally seen through their eyes. This is perhaps best seen in Bergman's tendency to use his camera to substitute for a child's first-person point of view. It is telling that in order to access our seemingly incomprehensible world, Bergman often reverts to the perspective of children, because for him:

...[C]hildren live in a world of tormented innocence. They are surrounded by tortured adults who cannot or will not communicate to them the reasons for their own anguish. Distrustful, the children seek their own answers by observing and eavesdropping on the adult world. They try, as they develop understanding, to personify and simplify good and evil. Like heroes of Greek tragedy, they are driven by a curiosity, a need to know. Bergman's children are constantly reaching out to touch and communicate with an adult world which they cannot understand.⁴⁹

When children appear in Bergman's work, they are fighting to maintain the balance between the real, the dreamed, the nightmarish, and the imagined.

⁴⁸ Robert Stam, "Allegories of Spectatorship," in *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 29.

⁴⁹ Stuart M. Kaminsky, "The Torment of Insight: Children and Innocence in the Films of Ingmar Bergman," in *Ingmar Bergman: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Kaminsky with Joseph F. Hill (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 10.

Bergman once noted that, “childhood has always been my chief supplier.”⁵⁰

However, all of the children protagonists in Bergman’s work seem to be drawn from a singular source—Bergman’s own childhood. As one of Bergman’s enduring muses, Liv Ullmann, saw it: “In all his...films about the father and mother, the victim is the person who is writing the film, which is Ingmar.”⁵¹ Thus, it is frequently the point of view of the young male which Bergman utilizes as a narrative framing device.

In *The Silence* (1963), Bergman employs a 10-year-old boy, Johan, to function as a narrative guide through a vaguely familiar but unknown world. Wandering around the fictional city of Timoka, Johan’s perspective frames the action of the film—which revolves primarily around his mother, Anna, and her sister Ester. Most curious is the phenomenological impact Johan can have on the narrative itself. The film’s initially drowsy pace is set from the opening shot, where the boy sleepily wakes up in a train car. By gazing into the camera after rousing himself, the audience is limited to seeing the world through his eyes. The main action of the film is presented through a fragmentary structure, mimicking the child’s (and thus the audience’s) understanding of the world. Three years later Bergman famously returned to this conceit.

In *Persona* (1966), another young boy (played by Jörgen Lindström, the same young actor as in *The Silence*) turns up at the end of a bizarre pre-credit sequence. Once again, the boy wakes up from sleep and turns toward the camera and puts up his hand. Yet, when the angle reverses, he is shown to be reaching toward the image of a woman’s

⁵⁰ Bergman, *Images: My Life in Film*, trans. Marianne Ruuth (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), 366.

⁵¹ Liv Ullmann, qtd. in, Geoffrey Macnab, *Ingmar Bergman: The Life and Films of the Last Great European Director* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 214-215.

face projected onto a large white screen. As the boy runs his hand over the woman's eyes, nose, and mouth, the image sharpens and blurs several times—the adult unable to be grasped, felt, or even understood. The rest of the film proper plays out on this screen where the woman's face had appeared, ostensibly playing for the young boy, an audience of one.

Even in *Fanny and Alexander* (1982), which features both a male and female protagonist, it is clearly Alexander with whom the audience is meant to sympathize—precisely because Bergman frames the film through Alexander's perspective.⁵² After all, in the film's opening shot, the image of a theatre's proscenium arch fills the screen. After a momentary pause, the red curtain rises, revealing small yet detailed paper figurines in classic poses dotting the stage. After another pause, the painted backdrop further back also moves out of view. Suddenly the faux theatre's wings, drops, and borders are framing the face of the 10-year-old boy, the most personal of Bergman's cinematic proxies. Outside of the whimsical trappings of the puppet theatre, the reality in which Alexander resides is ruled over by his stern stepfather, Bishop Vergerus. After catching his imaginative stepson in a lie, the Bishop feels it necessary to set Alexander straight: “Imagination, you understand, is something splendid, a mighty force, a gift from God. It is held in trust for us by the great artists, writers, and musicians...I don't know what you imagine. Do you believe that you can lie and shuffle without any consequences and without punishment?”⁵³ It is the reality of adulthood that is the terrible enemy which

⁵² Coincidentally, *Fanny and Alexander* was the final full-length film which Bergman completed between his 1981 and 1989 productions of *Nora* and *Ett Dockhem*. In this way, the film could be considered a spiritual sibling to the productions.

⁵³ *Fanny and Alexander*, written and directed by Ingmar Bergman (1982; New York: Criterion Collection, 2011), DVD.

renders the child helpless, and only through their extraordinary powers of childhood imagination are they able to find truth.

Later in his career, Bergman briefly seemed to reevaluate his tendency to filter every experience through a decidedly masculine viewpoint:

I am very much aware of my own double self. The well-known one is very under control...every thing is planned and very secure. The unknown one can be very unpleasant. I think this side is responsible for all the creative work, he is in touch with the child. He is not rational, he is impulsive and extremely emotional. Perhaps it is not even a he, but a she.⁵⁴

One of the few places in which a young pre-pubescent girl appears as one of Bergman's protagonists is in one of his final screenplays, *Faithless* (2001). The film was written by Bergman but directed by Liv Ullmann. Bergman had the tendency to leave children out of his films featuring fighting spouses, so it was Ullmann who made the directorial choice to not only increase the presence of the child, but to use it as a framing device for the entire film: "I thought about the child because I couldn't make a movie making this woman the heroine. To me, she made so many strange choices that I can't feel sorry for her. That was why I showed so much more of the child in the movie. The child is the only victim. The child didn't make any choice."⁵⁵ After screening the film, Ullmann recalled Bergman's reaction to the presence of the child, exclaiming "Shit! Why didn't I think of that?"⁵⁶

Hilde's presence at the end of *Nora* places her firmly within the Bergmanian legacy of silent children struggling to understand the complex adult world in which they

⁵⁴ Kakutani, 26.

⁵⁵ Macnab, 214. Like the negative response to the missing Helmer children in *Nora*, Bergman had weathered similar criticism for omitting Johan and Marianne's two daughters from his 1973 film version of *Scenes from a Marriage*.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 215.

find themselves. Yet, Bergman undercut his purposes by having Hilde appear only briefly at the beginning and end of the play. During the rest of the production, Hilde's presence was suggested by having her doll sit in a chair when she herself was not present on stage. Here again, Bergman's revolutionary spirit was hamstrung by his latent misogyny, which he may have inherited from his obsession with Strindberg. This view of Bergman may be controversial, but is not completely unfounded. In an oft-cited critique, Joan Mellen suggests that Bergman might depict what "he sees" reflected in society around him, but in doing so "accepted an anachronistic view, without questioning how his adherence to the spirit of the Northern Protestant culture from which he emerges has shaped his understanding of the potential of woman."⁵⁷ She further notes that in Bergman's films, the lives of his female protagonists:

...are ensnared at at much more elementary level of human development. Their lives lack meaning because they are rooted in biology and an ability to choose a style of life independent of the female sexual role. In this sense Bergman is far harder on his women than on his men. They are depicted as if on a lower notch on the evolutionary scale.⁵⁸

Onstage, this effect is only amplified. Like with Hilde and Nora both, as fascinating as they might be to Bergman, women are ultimately no more than dolls to be played with and arranged nicely.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Bergman's biography and body of theatrical work, especially as they pertain to his creation of the adaptation of *Nora*. The following chapters will explore the process of preparing a directorial approach for the 2015 staging

⁵⁷ Joan Mellen, "Bergman and Women: *Cries and Whispers*," *Film Quarterly* 27.1 (Autumn 1973), 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

of *Nora* at Baylor University. Chapter Two will outline the necessary theoretical approaches to working with Bergman's adaptation while also providing a detailed analysis of the playscript. Chapter Three will document the director's work in creating a concept and collaborating with designers. Chapter Four will examine the practical and pedagogical processes used in rehearsal with actors. Finally, Chapter Five will reconcile the strengths and weaknesses of the 2015 Baylor production of *Nora* in regards to the director's approach.

CHAPTER TWO

Analyzing an Adaptation

Introduction

In a letter from 1872, Ibsen expressed concern to a translator about how his plays might be presented outside of Norway. For him, the act of translation was “not simply a matter of translating the meaning but also, to a certain extent, of recreating the style and the images and ultimately adapting the entire form of expression to the structure and demands of the [new] language.”¹ This view seems to support the contemporary belief of adaptation theorist Katja Krebs, who defines the translation/adaptation function as “the art of collaboratively rewriting.”² Yet, beyond simply rearranging plot points or cutting characters or reassigning lines, adaptation theorist Linda Hutcheon posits that the crucial criterion for any adaptation is its “extended critical and creative engagement with a particular text.”³

Analyzing *how* an adaptation or translation of a play works is often a game of differences. In order to fully understand how Bergman’s adaptation specifically engages with Ibsen’s text, this chapter will analyze both *A Doll’s House* and *Nora*. Additional consideration will be given to the influence of August Strindberg in terms of how Bergman approached the revisions of Ibsen’s structure and cast of characters.

¹ Henrik Ibsen to Fredrik Gjertsen, in *Letters of Henrik Ibsen*, trans. John Nilsen Laurvik and Mary Morison (New York: Duffield and Company, 1908), 228.

² Katja Krebs, “Introduction,” in *Translation and Adaptation in Theatre and Film*, ed. Krebs (New York: Routledge, 2014), 3.

³ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 39.

Analyzing A Doll's House

Ibsen's unique approach to play construction, or the 'Ibsenian form,' has been subject to many different readings and theories. Ibsen scholar Halvdan Koht suggested that Ibsen's early experiments with Shakespearean drama led to a continued emulation of the Bard in his later plays.⁴ In his landmark work *The Ibsen Cycle*, Brian Johnston has theorized Ibsen's entire *oeuvre* is a multi-layered "cycle," directly translating the Hegelian dialectic into the dramatic form. According to Johnston, Ibsen takes two opposing forces (in *A Doll's House*, Man is the *thesis* and Woman, the *antithesis*) and forces them together, in order to arrive at a new world order.⁵ Classical theatre scholar Norman Rhodes claims *A Doll's House* possesses a bipartite structure: "the first two acts and the beginning of the third is basically a nineteenth-century melodrama...and the last scene of the third act resembles a mini-Greek tragedy."⁶ English playwright George Bernard Shaw used a similar notion of hybridity to analyze *A Doll's House* in his treatise *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. For Shaw, Ibsen might have composed "a very ordinary French drama" if not for Nora's final discussion with Torvald. Instead, this dramatic event created "the addition of a new movement, as musicians would say, to the dramatic form [and it] founded a new school of dramatic art."⁷ Yet the most traditionally accepted notion is that Ibsen was writing variations on the Scribean 'well-made play.' Classical

⁴ For more, see Halvdan Koht, *The Life of Ibsen* (New York: Blom, 1971).

⁵ For more, see Brian Johnston, *The Ibsen Cycle: The Design of the Plays from Pillars of Society to When We Dead Awaken* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1992).

⁶ Norman Rhodes, *Ibsen and the Greeks: The Classical Greek Dimension in Selected Works of Henrik Ibsen as Mediated by German and Scandinavian Culture* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1995), 120.

⁷ George Bernard Shaw, "The Technical Novelty in Ibsen's Plays," in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism: Now Completed to the Death of Ibsen* (London: Constable, 1948), 219.

theatre theorist Steven S. Stanton exhaustively outlines the seven technical features that a ‘well-made play’ must exhibit:

1) a plot based on a secret known to the audience but withheld from certain characters (who have long been engaged in a battle of wits) until its revelation (or the direct consequence thereof) in the climactic scene serves to unmask a fraudulent character and restore to good fortune the suffering hero, with whom the audience has been made to sympathize; 2) a pattern of increasingly intense action and suspense, prepared by exposition (this pattern assisted by continued entrances and exits, letters, and other devices); 3) a series of ups and downs in the hero’s fortunes, caused by his conflict with an adversary; 4) the counter-punch of *peripeteia* and *scene a faire*, marking, respectively, the lowest and highest point in the hero’s adventures, and brought about by the disclosure of secrets to the opposing side; 5) a central misunderstanding or *quiproquo*, made obvious to the spectator but withheld from the participants; 6) a logical and credible *dénouement*; and 7) the reproduction of the overall action pattern in the individual acts.⁸

A Doll’s House does indeed show some structural similarities to this form. This is a result, no doubt, of Ibsen’s familiarity with Scribe’s work after directing twenty-one of his plays at Det Norsk Theater in Bergen. However, there are enough disparities between Scribean and Ibsenian structure to dissuade an analysis in this vein.

Amongst all of these views, Edward Murray has posited the most approachable analysis of the Ibsenian form. Murray consolidates ideas from writers William Archer, Kenneth Thorpe Rowe, and Lajos Egri in order to suggest Ibsen wrote in a *tripartite* structure. The three main points of consideration are: 1) a point of attack; 2) a turning point; and 3) a resolution made up of a crisis, climax, and conclusion.⁹ Because Ibsen wrote in a three-act structure, each act then focuses on one of the three structural elements identified by Murray.

⁸ Stephen S. Stanton, “Introduction: The Well-Made Play and the Modern Theater,” in *Camille and Other Plays*, ed. Stanton (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), xii-xiii.

⁹ Edward Murray, *Varieties of Dramatic Structure: A Study of Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 88.

The story of *A Doll's House* takes place over three days—Christmas Eve, Christmas, and Boxing Day—in the home of Nora and Torvald Helmer. Like many of Ibsen's plays, *A Doll's House* has a late point of attack. That is, most of the major dramatic action in the lives of these characters has already occurred, so the main question the play seeks to resolve has to be introduced through exposition. Act I focuses on the protagonist Nora's main line of action—keeping a secret from her husband, Torvald. Nora is given an allowance of money from Torvald in the guise of Christmas preparation.¹⁰ We later learn this bizarre ritual of remuneration is tied to Nora's discrete repayment of a loan she borrowed without Torvald's knowledge. Then, when her old friend Christine Linde makes a surprise call, Nora reveals the story of Torvald's illness and the secret forgery required to finance the family's life saving trip to Italy. The point of attack is revealed. In return for Christine's silence, Nora convinces Torvald to employ Christine at the bank. However, this job comes at the expense of Krogstad, Nora's secret creditor. Faced with unemployment, he threatens to blackmail Nora unless his job at the bank is secured. When Nora tries to persuade Torvald to keep Krogstad at the bank, he refuses. Torvald is especially concerned that Krogstad's reputation has been soiled by forgery, the same crime Nora has secretly committed. The first act concerns itself with the dramatic question of whether or not Nora's secret will be revealed.

Act II then follows Nora's attempts to escape her situation. Torvald again refuses to hear Nora's pleas. When she questions his reasons for condemning Krogstad, Torvald becomes enraged and signs Krogstad's termination notice. In hopes of getting an advance to pay off the loan, Nora then turns to Dr. Rank, an old friend of the family. Before Nora

¹⁰ Ibsen's play premiered 21 December 1879, almost perfectly aligned with the action of the play, which no doubt heightened the sense of realism for his original audience.

can ask him for money, Dr. Rank reveals he secretly harbors a passionate love for Nora. By daring to reveal this previously hidden truth, Rank alienates Nora who naturally believes his true feelings should not be expressed. The now-unemployed Krogstad returns, offering to nullify the promissory note if a new, better job at the bank is created for him. When Nora rejects this offer, Krogstad puts a letter explaining the entire history of Nora's loan into the locked mailbox, for which only Torvald has the key. This moment serves as the turning point of *A Doll's House*, when Nora's fate is sealed. Christine urges Nora to tell the truth, but Nora stubbornly refuses—proclaiming her belief that a 'wonderful thing' will happen when Torvald finds out. Heading into the final act, the major dramatic question is concerned with how Torvald will react when made aware of Nora's duplicitousness.

Ibsen teases the audience at the top of the third act, when Krogstad has second thoughts about exposing Nora. However, Christine urges him to let the truth come out. In doing so, the former lovers reconcile and Krogstad leaves the letter in the mailbox. The Helmers return from a masquerade, where Torvald has had too much champagne. His drunken seduction of Nora fails when Rank arrives to give Nora his final farewell. With the two major subplots resolved, the rest of the act plays out in quick succession the three parts observed by Murray. The crisis occurs when Torvald opens the mailbox to find Krogstad's letter. This is followed by the climax, in which Torvald refuses to take the blame for Nora's past indiscretions. Instead, he scolds his wife mercilessly for compromising the ethical and social standing of their family. He continues to castigate her until a second letter from Krogstad arrives. In it, Krogstad reveals he is absolving Nora's debt and no further repayment or exposure will be necessary. Torvald is relieved,

claiming “I’m saved!” He ‘forgives’ Nora for the entire incident and thanks her for her love. However, Torvald’s actions have only served to fracture the relationship between he and his wife.

The conclusion of the play is instigated by Nora, who changes out of her tarantella costume into travelling clothes. Before she leaves, Nora demands an ‘accounting’ between herself and Torvald for the first time in their marriage. She explains how during her entire life, she has been treated as a doll—first by her father and now by her husband. Moreover, she has seen that Torvald’s refusal to bring about the ‘wonderful thing’ (that is, her presumption that Torvald would publicly protect her reputation) proves she has been living with a stranger. When Torvald protests, Nora tells him reconciliation can only occur between them if their life together could become a true marriage. Nora leaves Torvald to consider her words, as a door slams from downstairs.

Within a few months of the premiere, performances of *A Doll’s House* proved to be so controversial that Ibsen was encouraged to craft an alternate ending. However, it wasn’t until the 1880 Munich production of *A Doll’s House* that the playwright rewrote the conclusion.¹¹ As the story goes, Hedwig Neimann-Raabe, the actress playing Nora in Munich, refused to perform Ibsen’s original finale, declaring emphatically, “*I would never leave my children!*”¹² Ibsen gave into the actresses’ demand, and created this altered dialogue:

¹¹ This production occurred at the Residenztheater, where a century later Bergman’s *Nora* would premiere.

¹² The exact origin of the story is apocryphal, but appears in most Ibsen biographies in one form or another.

HELMER. Go then! [*Seizes her arm.*] But first you shall see your children for the last time!

NORA. Let me go! I will not see them! I cannot!

HELMER [*draws her over to the door, left*]. You shall see them. [*Opens the door and says softly.*] Look, there they are asleep, peaceful and carefree. Tomorrow, when they wake up and call for their mother, they will be - motherless.

NORA [*trembling*] Motherless...!

HELMER. As you once were.

NORA. Motherless! [*Struggles with herself, lets her travelling bag fall, and says*] Oh, this is a sin against myself, but I cannot leave them. [*Half sinks down by the door*]

HELMER [*joyfully, but softly*] Nora!
[*The curtain falls.*]¹³

After seeing this ending in performance, Ibsen considered it “a barbaric outrage to be used only in emergencies.”¹⁴ In 1880, the playwright took to the Danish newspaper *Nationaltidende* to issue an open letter on the subject of the altered conclusion:

Its use is absolutely contrary to my wishes, and I hope that it will not be used by many German theatres...our dramatic works are constantly being violated both by translators, heads of theatres, directors and actors at minor theatres. But if there is a threat of suchlike in my case, I prefer, having learned from previous experience, to commit such violence myself, rather than surrender my works to treatment and ‘adaptation’ by less careful and less skilful hands than my own.¹⁵

The playwright defended the original ending, emphasizing its importance in the context of the rest of the dramatic action: “I might honestly say that it was for the sake of the last scene that the whole play was written.”¹⁶ Other directors and actresses—even Neimann-

¹³ *The Oxford Ibsen*, Vol. X, ed. James Walter McFarlane (London: Oxford UP, 1961), 287f.

¹⁴ Meyer, 21.

¹⁵ Ibsen, “Letter to the Editor,” *Nationaltidende* [Copenhagen, Denmark], 17 February 1880.

¹⁶ Sprinchorn, *Letters and Speeches*, 300.

Raabe—came to publically decry it as well.¹⁷ Ultimately, Ibsen restored his original ending and demanded it be used for all ‘official’ productions.

In this case, Bergman appears to have shared Ibsen’s view. In preparation for *Nora*, he noted that, “in that last scene you have the whole solution to the rest of the play.”¹⁸ In fact, Bergman advocated it as a leaping off point: “The one great mistake—and I’ve seen it committed time after time in productions of *A Doll’s House*—is to forget that, with this play, you have to start at the end. Then you can go forward from there.”¹⁹

From Et Dukkehjem to Nora

The complicated legacy of *A Doll’s House* and its various translations and adaptations makes comparison and analysis difficult. The publication and production histories of Ibsen’s play have created a multitude of versions, each different from the other.

Et Dukkehjem, as *A Doll’s House* is known in its native tongue, was composed by Ibsen in the Norwegian of his day. However, Ibsen’s Norwegian is a linguistic form recognized today as “Dano-Norwegian.” This form still bore traces of the Danish tongue from the two countries’ union which had dissolved only half a century prior in 1814. Today’s Norwegian has developed two distinct idioms: Bokmål (Book Language), which bears many similarities to Ibsen’s Dano-Norwegian; and the regional Nynorsk (New Norwegian), which is “based on those modern dialects which most faithfully preserved

¹⁷ Raabe also came to discredit the ending, and in later productions would only use Ibsen’s original.

¹⁸ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 13.

¹⁹ Ibid.

the forms of Old Norwegian.”²⁰ Even in his own language, Ibsen’s play is considered adapted when its presented in present-day Book Language (usually with regards to small alterations in spelling and grammar), while the play is considered translated when performed in New Norwegian.²¹ Thus, today *every* production of Ibsen’s play is either an adaptation, translation, or “tradapation” (to borrow a term from Québécois theatremaker Michel Garneau). Ibsen’s source text can now only be understood in abstraction—it *is* what every other production or publication of *A Doll’s House* is *not*.

As the influence of Ibsen spread across the English-speaking world, *A Doll’s House* was translated many times. Recently, Ibsen scholar Thomas van Laan examined six of the most common translations of *A Doll’s House* which “the English-speaking reader is most likely to come in contact with.”²² Of these, Van Laan determined that the 1965 translation work of American-born Rolf Fjelde stands as the “best of the six.” He bases his determination on the modernist criterion of “authenticity,” stating that Fjelde captures “not only the gist of the original but also its tone and rhythms.”²³ Fjelde’s translation is often seen as authoritative due to his command of the cultures of both contemporary America and Ibsen’s Norway. Fjelde, an Ibsen scholar and founding president of the Ibsen Society of America, noted, “I speak the language...I’ve delved into

²⁰ Einar Haugen, *Norwegian–English Dictionary* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1974), 20.

²¹ Törnqvist, *Ibsen*, 50.

²² Thomas F. van Laan, “English Translations of *A Doll House*,” in *Approaches to Teaching Ibsen’s A Doll House*, ed. Yvonne Shafer (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1985), 6.

²³ Hutcheon, 39.

the Norwegian culture of Ibsen's period. And that's what is necessary to translate."²⁴

Others share van Laan's preference for Fjelde as well. Theatre critic and director Harold Clurman once called Fjelde's work "the truest to the original and unexcelled for theatrical performance."²⁵ For these reasons, Fjelde's translation is the closest to an "Americanized Ibsen" I can get, and will serve as a proxy for Ibsen's source text in this analysis.

Despite the Swedish language's mutual intelligibility with Norwegian, Bergman too had to first approach *Et Dukkehjem* as both translator and adaptor. However, with regards to the first *performance* in Munich in 1981, Bergman is credited only as director and adaptor, as he required the assistance of a German translator, Heiner Gimmmler. Complicating all of this, Bergman additionally considered himself the playwright of *Nora*, leading to the inclusion of the contradictory subtitle, "stage version of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* by Ingmar Bergman," whenever this version is performed.²⁶ No matter how many points of intersection it shares with Ibsen's work, *Nora* was designed by Bergman to stand as an independent text—a point supported by the current views of adaptation theory. Outside of privileging a source text in terms of originality, adaptation theorist Linda Hutcheon denies other attempts to create a hierarchy between versions. She states:

²⁴ Rolf Fjelde, qtd. in Mel Gussow, "Rolf Fjelde, 76, a Translator and Champion of Ibsen Plays," *New York Times*, September 13, 2002.

²⁵ Harold Clurman, qtd. in *ibid.*

²⁶ The reasoning behind Bergman's choice to retitle the play *Nora* is ambiguous. It is, on one hand, reflective of his radical approach—suggesting an increased concentration on the figure of Nora; on the other hand, *Nora* is the generally-accepted abbreviated form of the play's traditional German title *Nora oder Ein Puppenheim*.

“Multiple versions exist laterally, not vertically.”²⁷ Thus, both *A Doll’s House* and *Nora* should be considered independent of one another.

However, when Bergman staged the piece in Stockholm in 1989, it was not titled *Nora*. Instead, it assumed the Swedish title *Ett Dockhem* (*A Doll’s House*), a title traditionally reserved for presentations of Ibsen’s play in Sweden. Törnqvist notes that the 1989 production used virtually the same text of the 1981 staging of *Nora*. Any differences between the two productions can be traced directly to the presence of Hilde, the Helmers’ daughter.²⁸ However, Bergman retained only his director and adaptor credits, while he recruited playwright Klas Östergren to provide a new Swedish translation of the play. Östergren’s true contribution is unclear. Whether he was translating Ibsen’s *Et Dukkehjem* from Norwegian or Bergman’s *Nora* from German is not recorded.²⁹

The addition of Hilde alters Bergman’s vision just enough that *Ett Dockhem* cannot be seen as a strict translation. Simply put, the play has been changed too much to be a translation, but not enough to be considered an adaptation. For these reasons, I have chosen to treat the anomalous *Ett Dockhem* as neither adaptation or translation, but as a ‘revision’ of the earlier production of *Nora*. Akin to how a director’s cut of a film exists next to the original theatrical version, here *Ett Dockhem* can be seen as a more *definitive* version of Bergman’s vision.

²⁷ Hutcheon, xiv.

²⁸ Törnqvist, *Ibsen*, 92.

²⁹ Östergren’s presence here may partially be explained by his wife Pernilla’s casting as Nora in this production.

This production of *Ett Dockhem*, not the original *Nora*, was the version which which traveled to America in 1990 and with which most English speaking critics are familiar. This adds yet another level of translation, as the production was transmitted in English with the aid of headsets for the American audiences. Unfortunately, Östergren's translation was not preserved, and the production exists only through eyewitness accounts of various audience members.

However, an earlier translation of Bergman's *Nora* into English does exist. Frederick and Lise-Lone Marker used the German text of *Nora* to create a strict translation of the play as part of their landmark publication *Ingmar Bergman: A Project for the Theatre* (1983). The scripts for Baylor University Theatre's production were secured through Playwrights Guild of Canada, the organization to which the Markers have since transferred performance rights. However, this version bears differences from the earlier published translation—indicated by the subtitle “adapted and translated by Frederick J. Marker and Lise-Lone Marker” and its copyright date of 2013. Due to the presence of these myriad versions, the words of adaptation theorist Margaret Jane Kidnie come to mind: “the site of adaptation keeps getting entangled in the work's ongoing development.”³⁰ Consequently, the following analysis then can be understood as an examination of the Markers' “tradaptation” of Bergman's playtext of *Nora*, which is based on Ibsen's *Et Dukkehjem*.

³⁰ Margaret Jane Kidnie, “Introduction,” in *Shakespeare and the Problem of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 9.

Analyzing Nora

Like most adaptations, *Nora* has the ability to stand on its own while still sharing many similarities with its source. As in *A Doll's House*, *Nora* takes place during Christmas season in the Helmer household. However, in his notes for the play, Bergman suggested in a *A Dream Play*-like fashion, “time has stopped” in this world.³¹ To support this idea, Bergman’s “dreamplay” traded the surface realism of Ibsen’s late nineteenth-century Scandinavian setting for a timeless Strindbergian tableau: “A sofa, an armchair, a decorated Christmas tree in the background. Scattered on the floor are packages and toys—a helmet and sword, two large dolls, a locomotive.”³²

However, in production, Bergman was far more specific. In Munich, the director preserved elements of the late 1870s Ibsenian milieu. Törnqvist remembers that the characters in *Nora* “wore the stiff clothes of the 1880s, high collars and grey or black dresses for the gray-haired men, a corseted wine-red dress for Nora—a vivid spot in a grey world.”³³ For the Stockholm production, Bergman made further adjustments. The director set *Ett Dockhem* prior to 1905 (some 25 years later than Ibsen’s original setting) indicated by the presence of union flags on the Helmers’ Christmas tree and an *art nouveau* decor. This shift in time increased the audience’s sense of connection with the characters and made Nora’s radical ideas a bit more plausible. It also provided an auspicious historical backdrop for a play about emancipation—the political union between Sweden and Norway was dissolved on June 7, 1905.

³¹ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 9.

³² Bergman, *Nora*, adapt. and trans. Frederick J. Marker and Lise-Lone Marker (Toronto: Playwrights Guild of Canada, 2013), 1.

³³ Törnqvist, *Ibsen*, 95.

While an understanding of all of these types of detailed alterations are important, the scope of a point-by-point comparison is far too broad for this chapter. Instead, a chart is provided later in this document (see Appendix B) which closely examines each of the three iterations important to this study—Fjelde’s *A Doll’s House* from 1965, Bergman’s adapted text of *Nora* from 1983, and the material created for the Baylor production of *Nora* in 2015. This chart outlines any additions or subtractions of material between these three “texts.” For the purposes of this chapter, Bergman’s changes can best be understood by examining two aspects: the restructuring of the plot elements and the redrawing of Ibsen’s five major characters—Nora, Torvald, Krogstad, Mrs. Linde, and Dr. Rank.

Structure

As noted, in adapting *A Doll’s House*, Bergman cut nearly one-third of Ibsen’s original text. Bergman believed cutting Ibsen’s play was necessary: “It’s always been said that Ibsen was such a marvelous architect of the drama...but in *A Doll’s House* he still has immense difficulties with the building, the construction of the drama.”³⁴ Instead of Ibsen’s carefully structured three-act play, Bergman’s script features an episodic sequence of fifteen scenes with no intermission.³⁵ Bergman’s translators, the Markers, describe the director’s process as a “dismantling of the naturalistic superstructure of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*.”³⁶ As previously noted in Chapter One, Bergman divided the Helmer home three minimally suggested domestic settings. In linear succession, the

³⁴ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 7. Of course, Bergman believed Strindberg “never had that difficulty.”

³⁵ In Stockholm, Bergman’s *Ett Dockhem* had 16 scenes. The added scene is that of the opening sequence with Nora reading Hilde the fairy tale bedtime story.

³⁶ Marker and Marker, *Project*, back cover.

action shifted from the Helmers' parlor, to the dining room, and finally to the bedroom—suggesting an unending movement from public to private, external to internal.³⁷ Each set change was marked with a pause in the action, allowing for the minimal settings to be changed out in dreamlike transitions.

Bergman believed that through his reductivist approach, “you make it easier for [Ibsen], you make it easier for the actors, and you make it easier for the audience to grasp what he means.”³⁸ By excising many of the linking points of Ibsen's realistic plot, Bergman argued the story of the Helmers' reckoning could be told without “get[ting] lost in all those details.”³⁹ He saw the characters “caught in private hells of their own devising, trapped in relationships that are defined and deformed by a litany of recurrent rituals.”⁴⁰ By winnowing each scene to its essential action and character interactions, Bergman has unexpectedly unlocked the biggest, but heretofore unacknowledged, strength of his adaptation. Through “dismantling the naturalistic superstructure,” Bergman actually revealed the more complex chiastic plot substructure supporting Ibsen's work.

Chiastic structure draws its name from the rhetorical device of *chiasmus*, where two clauses are related to each other through a reversal of structures. Chiastic structure is a form of ring composition, an ancient literary technique which has been largely

³⁷ In Munich, Bergman extended this idea into his preshow. The director had his scene designer draw the exterior of the Helmers' home on the main curtain of the Residenztheater. Thus, when the show began and the curtains parted to reveal the interior set, Bergman achieved the theatrical equivalent of a cinematic zoom shot.

³⁸ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 7.

³⁹ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 229.

⁴⁰ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 2.

recognized in the work of Homer, the Bible, and other non-Western religious texts.⁴¹

Contemporary audiences are most acquainted with ring composition through Joseph Campbell's "hero's journey"—stories which return to their origin point, thus completing a ring, or circle. For this reason, ring compositions emphasize parallelism and repetition in narrative. However, chiastic structure is unique among ring compositions in its use of *inverted* parallelism.

In chiastic narrative, the writer is concerned with crafting a story "that goes up to a central point, makes a turn, then comes down step by step on the other side."⁴² The major movement of chiastic narrative is found through the second half of the story reversing the actions of the first half after the turning point. This form was explored in-depth by Strindberg in many of his later plays, especially *To Damascus*. Strindberg explains this play's structure almost identically to the *chiasmus*:

The art lies in the composition, which symbolizes the repetition that Kierkegaard speaks of. The action unrolls forward as it leads up to the asylum; there it hits the 'point' and then moves backward, kicking against the pricks, through the pilgrimage, the relearning, the ruminations, and then it starts anew in the same place at which the game ends and where it began.⁴³

Below, in Fig. 2.1, I have provided a chiastic analysis of *Nora*, which can be referenced against the earlier analysis of the plot of *A Doll's House*. In adapting, Bergman unknowingly did a large amount of the work by dividing Ibsen's play into

⁴¹ Much has been made of ring composition as a result of the oral tradition, in which the storyteller used the device as a means of simplifying the larger and more complex structures at work in the story.

⁴² Mary Douglas, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xii-xiii. Despite ring composition being recognized as an ancient form, Douglas's book is one of the pioneering studies on its existence.

⁴³ Strindberg, qtd. in Törnqvist, *Strindbergian Drama: Themes and Structure* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press Inc., 1982), 72-73.

fifteen scenes. According to chiastic structure, the first scene should then correspond inversely with the fifteenth, the second with the fourteenth, the third with the thirteenth, and so on. The eighth scene would then serve as the turning point. With the chiastic structure exposed, Bergman seems to be more right than he realized when he said, “Just take everything away and then you find out how *fantastic* the shape of this play really is.”⁴⁴ This formalist approach deepens Templeton’s assertion that Bergman worked to emulate Strindberg.

Locating this structure in Bergman’s *Nora*, combined with the pauses for set changes, shows how Murray’s tripartite points are still visible, if altered. The point of attack remains tied to Nora’s confession of her crime to Christine; the crisis, climax, and conclusion all remain focused on the Helmers. The major structural difference shown by this mode concerns the play’s turning point, which is now found in Rank’s willing revelation of his love for Nora. This helps address some of the constant criticism which has historically dogged Ibsen’s play. Instead of hinging upon the melodramatic convention of Krogstad’s letter, Rank’s admission of love works has a far more potent pivot point in moving the play from secrecy to truth.

Only two of the cuts made by Bergman disrupt this flow, as indicated by the bracketed steps. The first and last pediments of the play have been cut—the opening and closing of the door.

⁴⁴ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 229.

- 1.1 [The door opens]
- 1.2 Nora enters / Nora alone
- 1.3 Nora accepts Torvald's offer of money
- 1.4 Nora lies
- 1.5 Torvald sees Nora as a child
- 1.6 A final kiss
- 2.1 Linde arrives
- 2.2 Nora reveals her secret by choice
- 3.1 Rank arrives
- 3.2 Rank chooses life
- 3.3 Nora finds a loophole
- 3.4 Torvald hires Linde
- 4.1 Krogstad arrives
- 4.2 Nora admits her forgery to Krogstad
- 4.3 Krogstad offers Nora salvation / Nora rejects
- 5.1 Nora begs Torvald for help / Torvald rejects
- 6.1 Nora and Linde plot / Nora rejects Linde's help
- 7.1 Nora seals Krogstad's fate
- 8.1 Rank speaks his truth
- 9.1 Krogstad seals Nora's fate
- 10.1 Nora and Linde plot / Nora accepts Linde's help
- 11.1 Nora begs Torvald for help / Torvald accepts
- 12.1 Linde admits her love to Krogstad
- 12.2 Linde offers Krogstad salvation / Krogstad accepts
- 12.3 Krogstad exits
- 13.1 Torvald dismisses Linde
- 13.2 The loophole closes
- 13.3 Rank chooses death
- 13.4 Rank exits
- 14.1 Nora's secret is revealed by force
- 14.2 Linde exits
- 15.1 A final kiss
- 15.2 Torvald sees Nora as an adult
- 15.3 Nora tells the truth
- 15.4 Nora rejects Torvald's offer of money
- 15.5 Nora exits / Torvald alone
- 15.6 [The door closes]

Fig. 2.1. The chiastic structure of *Nora*.

Bergman's script cuts Nora's entrance alongside the porter and a discussion with the maid Helene. The script starts with Nora calling, "Come here, Torvald, and I'll show you all the things I've bought."⁴⁵ However, in performance, Bergman supplemented the missing material by creating an opening tableau to help flesh out his concept for each production. For the 1981 Munich production, Nora was:

...[A]lready seated, utterly immobile, in the midst of a wilderness of dolls, and other suggestive relics of childhood. Leaning back against the pillows of the plush sofa, she stared out into empty space—virtually the picture of a human doll waiting to be taken up and played with. The very distant and faintly audible sound of an old-fashioned music-box tune [Robert Schumann's *Träumerei* from *Kinderszenen (Scenes of Childhood)*] added to the strongly oneiric mood of nostalgia and suppressed melancholy that was created by this silent image of her motionless, oddly dejected figure.⁴⁶

Eight years later in Stockholm, Bergman's approach to this opening sequence was radically different. The prologue he created for *Ett Dockhem* had to reflect the production's major addition—the presence of Hilde. As the curtain parted:

Nora was sitting on the sofa reading the end of a fairy tale to her almost identically dressed daughter: '...but a prince and his bride brought with them as much silver as they could carry. And they moved to the castle east of the sun and west of the moon.' The reading was accompanied by sweet, romantic piano music, 'The Maiden's Prayer,' as from a music box. Having received a goodnight kiss from her mother, Hilde left for bed. Nora lay down on the sofa, whistling the tune that had just been heard, put one arm in the air, then let it fall to the floor as her whistling petered out.⁴⁷

The characterization of Nora is curiously divergent in these opening moments, especially considering Bergman used the same text for the rest of the piece. However, changes like these indicate that Bergman was willing to rework the internal structure of Ibsen's characters as radically as the internal structure of the play itself.

⁴⁵ Bergman, *Nora*, 1.

⁴⁶ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 23.

⁴⁷ Törnqvist, *Ibsen*, 98.

Ibsen scholar John Northam argues that fundamental to structure of *A Doll's House* is "Ibsen's construction of situations for the characters surrounding Nora which in one way or another illustrate her predicament."⁴⁸ Bergman seemed to take this idea literally by actually surrounding Nora with the four other central characters in his productions. In this way, "Nora's desperate struggle is watched all the time...by the other characters, by those four, impassive figures seated around the central platform."⁴⁹ The director had first attempted this metatheatrical device in an earlier production of *A Dream Play*, but in his production of *Nora* he found a deeper intertextual justification for the choice.

On one level, the characters' ability to freely flow in and out of the Helmers' home without realistic entrances heightened the entrapment of Nora, who was not allowed to leave the small playing area center stage. When the actors exited the Helmers' home, they remained present as actor-spectators on Bergman's stage itself. Through Bergman's staging, Ibsen's text became "a magical threshold *made visible*, and whose attention and presence seems to become the very subject of the *mise-en-scène*."⁵⁰ However, Bergman also employed the device to suggest that these other characters were trapped in their own "private hell" too. The imposing back wall of the enclosed set and absence of offstage space rendered the actors just as helplessly trapped as Nora. By

⁴⁸ John Northam, *Ibsen's Dramatic Method: A Study of the Prose Dramas* (London: 1953), 27.

⁴⁹ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 9.

⁵⁰ Maaret Koskinen, "'Everything Represents, Nothing Is': Some Relations Between Ingmar Bergman's Films and Theatre Productions," in *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 5.1 (Spring 1996): 84-85.

denying both the actors and characters any agency, the moment of Nora's exit was meant to be read as truly radical.⁵¹

For all of the irreverent choices Bergman the adaptor made, Bergman the director failed in staging an ending on par with the impact of Ibsen's original. In Munich, Bergman placed only Nora and Torvald onstage in hopes of focusing on the damage done to the *marital* relationship. In his estimation, "the consequences of Nora's choice were meant for Torvald and Torvald alone."⁵² But, when Nora finally made her exit at the end of the otherwise riveting production, it was through a small, hidden closet door at the back of the stage which popped open after her last line. Countering the feeling of Nora being a "doll waiting to be taken up and played with" of the opening tableau, here the doll was provided with an unexpectedly easy escape by an unseen hand.

The Stockholm production—set apart from the Munich production primarily by Hilde's presence—worked to strengthen the impact of Nora's decision on the Helmers' *familial* relationship. The consequences could no longer solely be for Torvald. As the show concluded, Hilde appeared on the stage, woken up by the shouting of the parents. In contrast to the bedtime story of the show's prologue, Hilde (and the audience) observed the decidedly non-fairy tale ending of her parents' marriage. Moments later, Nora marched offstage and "left via the auditorium—as if she were a member of the audience,

⁵¹ Törnqvist writes much of Bergman's choice to transpose two words in Nora's final line. Ibsen's play has Nora telling Torvald that so much would have to change in order for their "life together to become a marriage." Bergman supposedly "cleverly updated it" to read "marriage to become a life together," but neither the 1983 or 2013 translations by the Marker indicate this change.

⁵² Marker and Marker, *Project*, 14.

departing from the theatre along with them.”⁵³ Any power that Nora’s exit might have gathered was undercut by Bergman’s true final image, as remembered by Törnqvist:

Left alone with her father—just as Nora had been left alone with *her* father—Hilde seemed doomed to relive Nora’s experience. Deprived of her mother and lacking a sister or brother, Hilde would have to console herself by playing the role of mother to her doll. In his ending Bergman clearly outlined the vicious circle in which the child with just one parent finds itself—a central issue in a social environment where divorces tend to be the rule rather than the exception.⁵⁴

Characters

The notorious enmity between Ibsen and Strindberg began over the character of Nora in *A Doll’s House*. Strindberg, a vehement misogynist, disapproved of the entire play on account of its feminist inclinations. He raged against the “swinery” of Nora, who “lies to her husband, conceals her forgery, smuggles away some cakes, and behaves shiftily over all kinds of simple matters, apparently because she has a taste for lying.”⁵⁵

Later, in his collection of stories *Getting Married*, Strindberg wrote a piece entitled “A Doll’s House,” in which a wife sends her husband a copy of the play. The husband, serving as a mouthpiece for Strindberg, imagines the way the play should have ended: “You, my little Nora, were badly brought up, I, old fool that I am hadn’t learnt any better. Pity us both! Throw rotten eggs at our educators but don’t just hit me on the head. Although I am a man, I am as innocent as you are!”⁵⁶

⁵³ Törnqvist, *Ibsen*, 106.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁵⁵ Strindberg, qtd. in Charles Marowitz, “A Noise Within: *A Doll House*,” *Theater Week* January 22, 1996, 26.

⁵⁶ Strindberg, *Getting Married*, trans. Mary Sandbach (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 44.

In addition to reducing Ibsen's text, Bergman also drastically reduced the *dramatis personae*. As noted in Chapter One, *Nora* removes the peripheral characters of the delivery boy, the Helmers' maid and household staff, and (until Hilde appeared in Stockholm) the three Helmer children—Ivar, Emmy, and Bob. The remaining five characters were adjusted to support Bergman's understanding of their true motives. These revisions also capture a Strindbergian spirit, which favor the men while dismissing the women.

Nora Helmer

Over the course of the past 136 years, Nora Helmer has been both celebrated and vilified. She has been described as everything from a “daughter of Eve” to a “bourgeois Medea.”^{57 58} As the protagonist of *A Doll's House*, Nora's causal progression from child to woman is closely linked with Ibsen's three-act structure. A self-professed “doll wife,” Nora prances about in the first act, behaves desperately in the second act, and gains a stark sense of reality during the final act of the play. She can be impulsive, stubborn, and temperamental, but she is also shown to be shrewd, caring, and capable of great growth. Ibsen wrote that she is:

...[A] big overgrown child, who must go out into the world to discover herself and so may be, in due course, fit to raise her children—or maybe not. No one can know. But this much is certain, that with the perspective on marriage that has opened up to her in the course of the night it would be immoral of her to continue living with Helmer: this is impossible for her and this is why she leaves.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ John Shout, “From Nora Helmer to Wendy Darling: If You Believe in Heroines, Clap Your Hands,” *Modern Drama* 35.3 (1992): 354.

⁵⁸ Templeton, *Ibsen's Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 112.

⁵⁹ Ibsen to Erik af Edholm, in Robert Ferguson, *Henrik Ibsen: A New Biography*, (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1996), 244. Ibsen was infatuated with his creation; once he believed Nora approached him in real life wearing a “blue woolen dress.”

From the start, Bergman's Nora emerges as a creation distinct from Ibsen's. In the opening tableau in Munich, she was onstage when the production began, laying inert on the couch, "filled with the sense of being unsatisfied, unfulfilled."⁶⁰ Yet, Bergman notes that in the play proper,

Nora goes away because she feels that her former life has been so...dirty. Because she has been living a lie, and she has loved her lie...She got the money, she falsified her father's signature, she has really behaved very badly, but then, you see, she's an anarchist. All of Ibsen's women are anarchists...You can see it everywhere, in almost every play by Ibsen.⁶¹

In this statement, Bergman seems to align himself with the Strindbergian belief that all of Ibsen's female characters are, at their core, nothing but liars.

Bergman also heightened the sexual politics in Ibsen's script in a Strindbergian way. In his preface to *Getting Married*, Strindberg wrote, "As far as I understand, Nora offers herself for sale...to be paid for in cash."⁶² Joan Mellen saw this reflected in Bergman's belief that "men move in an ethical realm, [while] women in a biological one."⁶³ In Bergman's production, Nora seductively wrapped her black stockings around Dr. Rank's eyes, suggesting the presence of a Strindbergesque dyad of eroticism and death. In the play's most controversial scene, Nora has sex with with Torvald after he berates her. When the next scene begins, Nora is fully dressed and explains to her decision to leave to Torvald, who is completely nude in bed. This is the point which Bergman chose to highlight Nora's feminine ruthlessness: "In that last scene, her

⁶⁰ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 9.

⁶¹ Ibid., 13.

⁶² Strindberg, *Getting Married*, xi.

⁶³ Mellen, "Bergman and Women," 3.

aggression and brutality are enormous...and she crushes Helmer completely.”⁶⁴ Joan Templeton likened this Nora to “the female praying mantis,” who uses her mate for sex, then abandons him.⁶⁵

Bergman cut the more implicit social discussion found in Ibsen’s text. In doing so, some critics believed that Bergman unwittingly had read Nora the way Strindberg had. For Strindberg, the play is not “a defense of the oppressed woman” but, given the innumerable references to the profligacy and flakiness of Nora’s father, “simply the illustration of the effect of heredity upon character.”⁶⁶

Torvald Helmer

Torvald Helmer is a man who appears to have everything. After recovering from a severe illness, he is a healthy, confident, morally righteous lawyer, husband, and father of three. He is the typical middle-class Ibsenian *pater familias*. He possesses an utterly conventional bourgeois behavior pattern, a belief in his position as the sole bread-winner, conservative attitudes toward money and debt, an absolutist view of the law, and a socially-normalized misogynistic view of women. He is simply a product of the society in which he exists.

In defending Torvald, Strindberg emphasized the character’s absolute morality, as he “openly confides everything to [Nora], even the affairs of his bank, which shows that he treats her as his true wife. She, not he, is the one who never tells anything. It is consequently a lie to say that he treats her like a doll, but true to say that she treats him

⁶⁴ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 12.

⁶⁵ Templeton, “Updating *A Doll House*,” 184.

⁶⁶ Marowitz, 27.

like one.”⁶⁷ In a similar vein, Bergman saw Torvald as more of a victim than Nora: “He’s a decent man who is trapped in his role of being the man, the husband. He tries to play his role as well as he can—because it is the only one he knows and understands.”⁶⁸ In Bergman’s concept, both characters are dolls, trapped in roles they don’t quite know how to play. For these reasons, Bergman believed “*A Doll’s House* is the tragedy of Helmer...and it must be made clear that Helmer’s tragedy is fully as interesting as the plight of Nora.”⁶⁹

In order to achieve this, Bergman sought out ways of weakening Torvald as the play reached its conclusion. As mentioned, while Nora gets dressed post-coitus in the final scene, Torvald was left nude under the blankets in their shared bed. His emotional and physical nakedness rendered him incapable of chasing after Nora when she left. He simply remained in bed, open and vulnerable to his wife’s emergent power. Bergman’s diminishment of Torvald simply away his rage, which again served to emphasize his moral goodness.

Bergman also used judicious cuts to help Torvald appear more pitiful as the drama concluded: “Ibsen gives Helmer the last line, you know...something about ‘the most wonderful thing.’ Well, I’ve taken that out. He simply lies down on the bed and cries like a very small child.”⁷⁰ To this, Templeton accuses Bergman of making him “the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 12.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 13.

pathetic victim of the stronger sex,” drawing parallels to the Strindbergian forbears of Adolph in *Creditors* and the Captain in *The Father*.⁷¹

Nils Krogstad

So often Nils Krogstad is ascribed the characteristics of the stage villain. He appears to be the shady creditor, who threatens the protagonist, hurls insults, scares children, and dreams of underhandedly taking Torvald’s new position at the bank. Yet, over the course of Ibsen’s play, Krogstad’s isolation and bitterness are shown to be informed by a misguided sense of righteousness. His dubious actions have only been taken in interest of others, particularly his children—which allows him, at his best, to work as an inversion of Nora.

Bergman particularly emphasizes how much he liked Krogstad, a character he felt was often “misinterpreted” in performance.⁷² True to form, Bergman’s Krogstad is neither the “moral cripple” as described by Dr. Rank nor the archetype of the melodramatic villain. While Krogstad comes across as softer in Bergman’s version, it is made clear that when it comes to he and Nora, “between oppressor and oppressed there can be no relationship.”⁷³ Together, Krogstad and his former love, Mrs. Linde, form two parts of an “emotionally crippled” whole, and funnel their frustration toward Nora.

Christine Linde

Mrs. Christine Linde is an “old friend” from Nora’s youth who arrives on the Helmers’ doorstep in a time of need. Ibsen deliberately uses this worldly woman as a

⁷¹ Templeton, “Updating *A Doll House*,” 184.

⁷² Marker and Marker, *Project*, 10.

⁷³ Ibid.

counterpoint to highlight his protagonist's naïveté. While Nora has lived a life of plenty, Christine has lived a life haunted by loss. And in a play where so much exposition is needed, the character of Christine largely functions as a stock character—the confidant. However Bergman's Linde bears "little resemblance to the innocuous, quietly pathetic friend of Ibsen stage tradition."⁷⁴

The difference is, as suggested, one of biology. Although she is a mother, Nora is presented as young, virile, and childlike in contrast to the widowed Linde whose children are grown. Where Nora is sexualized by Torvald and Dr. Rank (and even to some lesser extent by Krogstad who suggestively asks if Nora has anyway to raise the money she owes by fleetingly implying the act of prostitution), Linde is never associated with a sense of sexuality. Since his women are "limited by the nature of their participation in the sexual act," Bergman admitted that he viewed Mrs. Linde as the "villain in [his] interpretation."⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ More pointedly, he states: "Mrs. Linde is a parasite."⁷⁷ Moreover, she is parasitic in the way of a "moral fanatic," disrupting Nora's life as a "self-appointed and vindictive apostle of the truth."⁷⁸

Echoing the analyses of Mellen and Templeton, nearly every one of Bergman's descriptions of Christine is pejorative and misogynistic. He remarks her actions are "filled with a terrible resentment and aggression," which he later defines as "poison in

⁷⁴ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 235.

⁷⁵ Mellen, "Bergman and Women," 3.

⁷⁶ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 10. The actress in Bergman's production, Annemarie Wernicke, vehemently disagreed with this presentation of Linde.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 235.

her...she's venomous.”⁷⁹ Her motivation is reduced to the fact that, in Bergman's view, “she hates everyone.”⁸⁰ Bergman's script emphasizes this aspect, making Linde's participation in exposing Nora's lies a deliberate act. As a result, Bergman denies any type of satisfying romantic resolution for her and Krogstad. The couple's reconciliation, hinted at by Ibsen, is jettisoned by Bergman, who believed “anything that would happen to the two of them afterward is terrible.”⁸¹ Instead, in Bergman's play, he punishes became the punished, sharing a vision of hell where “the damned are condemned to torment one another.”⁸²

Dr. Rank

In *A Doll's House*, Dr. Rank is a devoted friend to the Helmers and frequent guest in their home. His social status as a practicing physician and a man of wealth is something Torvald admires. Nora carries on a flirtatious relationship with him, which is reciprocated but never acted upon. Nora tells Christine that Rank has ‘consumption of the spine.’ This condition is akin to tuberculosis, and in Ibsen's day, was often attributed to a decrease in the amount of semen a man could produce. In the play, it is highly implied that Rank's illness is a result of syphilis contracted by his father before the birth of his son and unwittingly handed down to him.

In addition to his poor health, Dr. Rank remarks how he has gone bankrupt and how his practice is suffering. All in all, his fortunes have changed for the worse, but he

⁷⁹ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 11.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 10.

bears it with a happy countenance. Strictly speaking, these characteristics typify Rank as the Scandinavian theatrical figure known as ‘the fifth business,’ or “the colorful, slightly mysterious, sexually ambivalent stock character who stands aloof from both the main couple and the subplot, but who nevertheless plays a central role in the dramatic action.”⁸³

As Bergman tried to avoid such stereotypical conventions in his adaptation, Rank became a problematic character. He explains:

When I first began thinking about cuts for this play, you know, the character that puzzled me most was Rank—I found him very strange. At first I asked myself what would happen if you simply took him out. Why is Rank there? And then I realized that Ibsen has played a very sophisticated game here. When I began to think about *why* he had written *A Doll’s House*, I saw that this is a play about love—Ibsen’s love for a woman he himself had created. Can you understand what I mean? Nora is one of the most wonderful of Ibsen’s women—and *Rank is Ibsen*.⁸⁴

Bergman’s romantic notion of Rank being Ibsen was designed to help the character provide what the director saw as “a lyrical antithesis” to Mrs. Linde’s spitefulness.⁸⁵ However, in the adapted text, Rank is by far the most heavily edited of the five remaining characters. Large swatches of dialogue have been excised from the scene between he and Nora. And most curiously, Rank does not place a card in the Helmers’ mailbox on his final exit. When examining the chiasmic structure of the play, his presence is necessary. As noted earlier in the chapter, Dr. Rank’s actions are crucial in shifting the dominant thematic movement of the play toward truth.

⁸³ Stephen Unwin, *Ibsen’s A Doll’s House—Page to Stage* (London: Nick Hern Books, 2007), 75.

⁸⁴ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

Conclusion

One last aspect of Strindberg's criticism of *A Doll's House* focused on Nora's callousness in leaving her children. The children are only seen briefly in Ibsen's original script, but their presence is crucial. Without Ivar, Emmy, and Bob around, the father and mother become simply husband and wife. Bergman's original depiction of the Helmers' conflict turned a familial struggle into just a marital one. Inspired by Bergman's reintroduction of Hilde, it felt necessary for the 2015 Baylor production of *Nora* to feature the figure of the Helmers' daughter. Her presence allowed the production to fulfill of the Strindbergian "dreamplay" aspects of Bergman's text while providing a means to reinforce the chiastic structure of the play.

CHAPTER THREE

The Design Process

Introduction

After adapting Ingmar Bergman's script for *Nora* to include the character of Emmy (named after the daughter in Ibsen's original text), the next phase of the directorial process required sharing my vision of the show with a team of fellow theatre artists. In previous productions I have directed, the approach to choosing designers was fairly straight-forward: I either hand-picked members of my design team or, in many cases, I performed most of the design duties myself. For the Baylor production of *Nora*, the design team was assigned earlier in the spring semester, without directorial input. Having long considered myself a "collaborative" director, I have come to realize that the skills required when directing in community theatres with limited resources and volunteer technicians are wholly different than when directing at a private university with a substantial production budget and a team full of professional designers and faculty-mentored students.

This chapter is designed to provide an understanding of the design process that shaped the Baylor production of *Nora*, from original concept to final execution. Owing to the unique nature of each director-designer relationship, this chapter documents the idea of "collaboration" as it pertains to each design element. While the process was by no means perfect, the highly successful nature of collaboration as part of the design phase did result

in a visual and aural aesthetic which largely captured the directorial interpretation of Bergman's script.

Bergman's Vision of Nora

Any research of the original productions of *Nora* invariably leads to a discussion of the two unique scenographic designs created by Bergman and his scenic designer Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss. Both in 1981 and 1989, the duo sought to create a *mise en scène* which contrasted with the typical realistic settings implied by Ibsen's text.

At both the Residenztheatre in Munich and later at Dramaten in Stockholm, Bergman staged the play in a conventional proscenium setup. In 1981, *Nora* was confined to one half of the Residenztheatre's famed turntable, in order to accommodate the scenic design for *Julie*. A minimalist approach was applied, in which the major scenic element was a quadrilateral platform which was dotted with furniture suggesting the Helmers' living room. As noted in Chapter Two, the actors remained onstage the entire performance, with any exits indicated by the character simply leaving the platform and returning to assigned seating behind the main playing space. The entire set was surrounded by "extremely high walls topped by small barred windows," deliberately designed to evoke an environment of imprisonment.¹

The scenography of Bergman's 1989 production built upon many of the ideas of the earlier presentation. Most notably, the scenic design was once again "dominated by a raised island like platform."² This time, however, the actors' seating areas flanked the

¹ Törnqvist, *Ibsen*, 94.

² Roger W. Oliver, "Tradition and Innovation," in *Ingmar Bergman: An Artist's Journey On Stage, On Screen, In Print*, ed. Oliver (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1995), 109.

main playing space to the left and right. Three chairs were placed on each side, now dividing the guests (Dr. Rank, Mrs. Linde, and Krogstad) from the Helmer family (Torvald, an empty chair for Nora, and Emmy's chair indicated by the presence of her doll). The area behind the platform featured enlarged black-and-white photographs of rooms decorated in *art nouveau* style.³ In the brief pauses for set changes during the production, the pictures were switched to suggest the three different domestic settings. This decidedly anti-realistic presentation of the Helmers' home was further suggested by large walls made of dark wood which enclosed the set. In contrast to the earlier production which emphasized entrapment, Palmstierna-Weiss and Bergman sought to replicate the aesthetics of a courtroom in this scenic design.

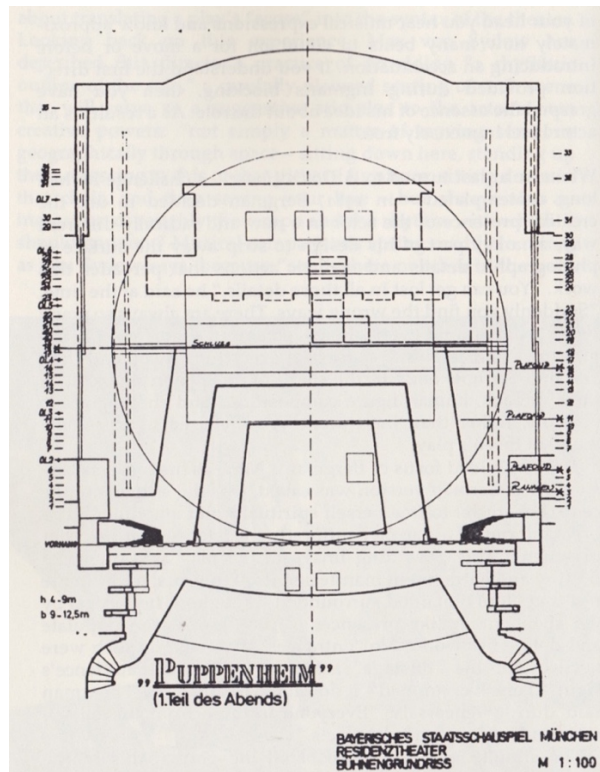


Fig 3.1. Ground plan of *Nora* at Munich's Residenztheatre.

³ Törnqvist, *Ibsen*, 106.



Fig. 3.2. *Nora* scenic design by Gunilla Palmstierna-Weiss at the Royal Dramatic Theatre.

The Performance Space

At Baylor, one of the first challenges the *Nora* design team and I had to consider was imagining the show in the Mabey Theatre, a hybrid thrust stage located in the Hooper-Schaefer Fine Arts Center. The Mabey boasts both a large proscenium arch framing a shallow fly space and a thrust stage which juts out into the center of the space, roughly in the shape of an asymmetrically-bisected kidney bean. This combination of features results in an audience configuration which wraps around the entirety of the thrust stage on three sides. Thus, the farther the audience members are seated from center, the more they lack a clear view inside the proscenium frame, limiting the usefulness of that feature. Not only would the Mabey force the designers to reconsider each of Bergman's proscenium-based choices, it would also demand creative solutions to the venue's lack of

a clear center line and architectural symmetry. It is often for these challenges and opportunities that graduate students are asked to direct their thesis shows in this space.

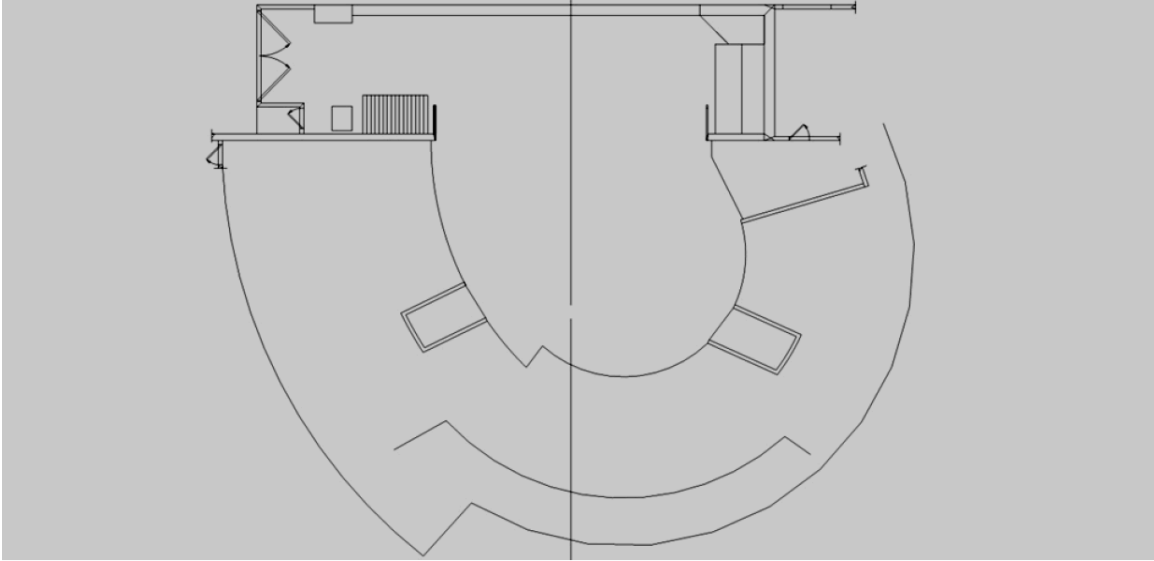


Fig. 3.3. Ground plan of Baylor University's Mabee Theatre.

Owing to the unusual spatial configuration, early conversations between the director and designers focused on being able to achieve three things. First, as mentioned, the prominent Bergmanian design conventions suited for a proscenium stage would need to be reconsidered. Second, each design element would need to assist the production's goal of eliminating the need for set changes as indicated by Bergman's script. Third, but most importantly, was the need to develop a cohesive style that fulfilled a two-pronged production concept.

Conceptual Approach

Creating a production concept is a director's way of designing a blueprint for the production that is both unique and universal. An effective concept will consciously guide the design team and actors, and subconsciously guide the audience to a deeper

understanding of the production. In developing a concept, director and theorist Jon Jory stated that a director should find “a way of revealing the heart of the play so that it lodges in the memory.”⁴ Indicated by Bergman’s restaged 1989 production, the heart of *Nora* lay in dramatizing not just a marital struggle, but a familial one. Consequently, the key to my production concept lay in finding a proper justification for reintroducing the figure of the Helmers’ daughter, Emmy (as she is known in Ibsen’s original script).

During one of many rereadings of the play, I was struck by the frequency with which Nora’s childish nature is referenced. Several times, Nora is told to “stop pretending,” as if characters were scolding a child with an overactive imagination. When Nora finally demands an adult conversation in the final scene, Torvald chastises her for “talk[ing] and think[ing] like a naïve child.”⁵ The image of a child thinking for, and speaking through, Nora brought to mind Strindberg’s description of the “dreamer” figure in *A Dream Play*. This character serves as a passive external spectator to the play’s main action, but possesses a “consciousness that rules them all...for him there are no secrets, no inconsistencies, no scruples, no laws. He neither acquits nor condemns, but merely relates the story; and because a dream is usually painful rather than pleasant, a tone of melancholy and compassion permeates the narrative.”⁶ Like a child playing with dolls, the dreamer’s perspective creates a realistic space where time and location are not strictly observed, thus making “everything is possible and likely.” If my directorial vision of *Nora* truly could be described as “one part *A Doll’s House* and one part *A Dream Play*,”

⁴ Jon Jory, *Tips: Ideas for Directors* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, 2002), 248.

⁵ Bergman, *Nora*, 59.

⁶ Strindberg, *A Dream Play*, 33.

the inclusion of Emmy as a “dreamer” figure was a necessary step to fully realizing this combination.

Taking into consideration all of these elements, the production concept for *Nora* was to filter the dissolution of the Helmers’ marriage through the mind of their six-year-old daughter Emmy. Sequestered away in her room, playing with her dolls, Emmy’s indirect understanding of the events would provide the bridge between fantasy and reality which so fascinated Bergman and permeates his script for *Nora*. When Nora utters what Bergman considered absolutely the central line of the play—“I’ve got to do it by myself...and that’s why I’m leaving you”—it is no longer just for Torvald, but Emmy as well.⁷

While researching the play, I discovered a photograph that would become a defining image of the production. It features a modern A-frame dollhouse with the profile of a child looming to one side playing with adult figurines (Fig. 3.4). Immediately, another image came to mind—the opening of Bergman’s film *Fanny and Alexander* (Fig. 3.5), in which Alexander is revealed to be playing with paper figurines of performers in his small proscenium puppet theatre. Taken together, these pictures linked Emmy to the lineage of Bergman’s cinematic children—desperate spectators hoping to escape the trappings of reality through the freedom of imagination.⁸

⁷ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 30.

⁸ Spatially, the images also represent the difference of our three-dimensional thrust production and Bergman’s two-dimensional proscenium staging.



Figs. 3.4 and 3.5. Production concept images—unnamed female child playing with dolls and dollhouse, and Alexander playing with figures in his puppet theatre in *Fanny and Alexander* (1982).

Another of the director's main responsibilities is to close the gap between the world of the play and the world of the audience. The script of *Nora* was originally conceived for a theatrically savvy German audience, familiar with both the work of Henrik Ibsen and Bergman himself. The Baylor patron base is largely a mixture of two groups: a “baby boomer” group, made up of Waco citizens, Baylor alumni, and the family members of student performers; and a “contemporary” group, made up of non-major Baylor students (most often in the form of Theatre Appreciation students attending the show solely for academic credit). During an early concept discussion with my directing mentor, it became increasingly clear that the original milieu of late 1870s Norway that both Ibsen and Bergman employed would not provide the same cultural understanding for our audience.

For this reason, the director's vision of *Nora* incorporating Emmy began to take shape in the middle-class America of the late 1950s. This time period felt appropriate for

several reasons. First, it was a cultural context that could speak to both factions of the Baylor audience. While the baby boomers would have grown up in that era, the contemporary students have been reintroduced to the time through popular culture offerings like *Mad Men*. Second, both Norway of the late 1870s and America of the late 1950s were the apogee of post-war societies that located power in strong patriarchal figures, exerted pressure on individuals and families to conform to social norms, stoked fears that surrounded the gain or loss of reputation, and had clearly defined marriage roles that situated the husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker.

By setting the play during the Christmas of 1959, the action of *Nora* would unfold on the doorstep of the emergent social radicalism of the 1960s. Through this time shift, the Baylor production had the potential to capture the spirit of Ibsen's revolutionary feminist story in a truly American context. Another unexpectedly salient aspect of translating *Nora* to this era was the proximity to the work of the child psychologists Jean Piaget and Margaret Lowenfield. Their pioneering studies on the stage of child development known as "symbolic play" was developed mid-1950s. This research served as a crucial launchpad for the young actress cast as Emmy in understanding how the young girl's mindscape might influence the action of the play.

Approaching Collaboration

Traditionally, Baylor University Theatre presents five productions in any given season—two in the fall semester and three in the spring. Each production timeframe has challenges, with the November slot (into which *Nora* was placed) facing issues of organization and technical management due to the placement of the season's musical in the first production slot. For both financial and administrative reasons, the musical is

given priority—namely because it is the sole opportunity to showcase the department’s emergent musical theatre program on the mainstage. Increasingly, auditions and construction have started occurring as part of the previous spring and summer terms, with rehearsals commencing prior to the beginning of the fall term. Thus, resources and personnel (both performance and technical) are at a premium once the semester begins. In order to avoid the problems faced by the fall graduate thesis show in 2014, plans were made to begin pre-production for *Nora* even earlier in the summer.

This adjusted schedule required the director and production team to begin collaboration in mid-July through initial discussion and design work. Since this accelerated timeframe placed pre-production in the middle of the summer term, the department production manager made accommodations to connect the team via teleconferencing. After a few informal, individual conversations with my directing mentor, an initial design concept meeting was held via Skype on July 14. Even with the team scattered across the country, the technology allowed for the presence of the scenic, costume, make-up, sound, and lighting designers, as well as the professors assigned as mentors for the lighting designer and director.

The meeting consisted of the presentation of a three-page “Director’s First Thoughts” document, which covered the major topics outlined above in the production concept. This was followed by a seventy-minute conversation, largely prompted by thematic questions posed by the scenic and costume designers. As my production concept deviated from more traditional presentations of *A Doll’s House*, my approach to this meeting required that I serve more as a guide than a dictator. As writer Italo Calvino notes, “what matters is not the enclosure of the work within a harmonious figure, but the

centrifugal force produced by it.”⁹ Thus, a second meeting two weeks later provided the designers an opportunity to respond to my initial ideas with their own collaborative contributions.

This meeting also allowed the director an opportunity to listen to the ideas that had inspired the designers. Images and sounds created a visual and aural milieu of 1950s Christmas and the design aesthetics of plastic dolls pervaded each designer’s vision of the show. The tone of the meeting was enthusiastic and supportive, wherein questions were asked, and ideas were accepted upon the collective agreement of the director and other designers.

After this second meeting, given the difficulty of coordinating distance and scheduling, the majority of pre-production work was put on hiatus for the rest of the summer term. The two necessary exceptions to this rule were the scenic and costume designers, as the development of these two elements was deemed crucial to setting the tone and style of the show from which the other designers could work.

Scenic Design

Creating an effective scenic design is one of the most important ways in which two-dimensional theatrical literature is transformed into a three-dimensional performance space. As the largest and most dominant visual aspect, the scenic design carries a large portion of the weight of a show, in both literal and figurative terms. In the Mabey Theatre, that weight is increased as no preshow curtain exists to hide the set before a performance. The scenic design is the audience’s first point of contact with a play. As

⁹ Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millennium* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2009), 77.

dramatically obvious and aesthetically pleasing as a scene design might be to an audience, it is not always so readily apparent during the first reading of a play.

It is within the months-long developmental process before a board is cut or a hammer is swung where the collaboration between the scenic designer and director is forged and refined. Due to the fact that our production team was reinterpreting many of the aesthetic choices of Palmstierna-Weiss and Bergman's original design, the faculty scenic designer and I quickly agreed upon establishing a strong mutual "partnership" in making this production uniquely our own.

From the start, conversations with the scenic designer were frequently held outside of the full-team production meetings. Over the summer break, he and I had several hour-long phone conversations and traded daily email correspondence full of questions, responses, and images. These early break-out conversations largely focused on researching and developing three specific design aspects: properly realizing the era and style suggested by the concept; determining which of Bergman's scenic elements were worth retaining; and envisioning an entirely new approach to the play's iconic door slam.

In the primary research stage, the scenic designer sought to identify dominant aspects of American mid-century design—with particular interest in the overlap between features found in both domestic architecture and children's dollhouses. The scenic designer described his process as imagining mid-century mod houses mashed together with memories of his sister's kaleidoscope dollhouse. Of serendipitous note was the fact that he independently found the exact same picture of the young girl peering into the dollhouse (see Fig. 3.4 above) that appeared in my own pre-production research. As noted, this image then became one of the defining visual ideas of the show.

One of the more notable features we discussed was the similarities between open space floor plans that became increasingly popular in the 1950s and the tendency of dollhouses to have more than one room revealed at once. It was determined that if the larger playing space of the Helmers' home then reflected this dollhouse feature (as Emmy would imagine it), it became possible to visualize the living room, the dining room, and the bedroom together in the space. This revelation provided a fruitful path to allowing the action to dissolve from area to area, thus eliminating the need for lengthy scene changes where Bergman's script moved from location to location.

After several productive back-and-forth conversations, the scenic designer took our ideas and attempted to reconcile all of them. This sketch (Fig. 3.6) shows an early attempt to realize our myriad of ideas in the theatre space.

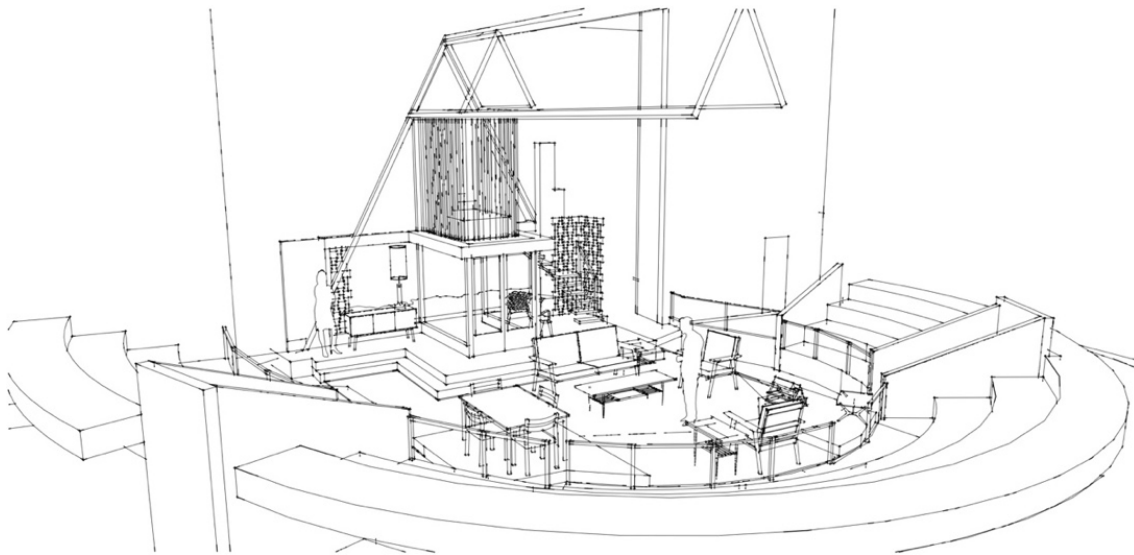


Fig. 3.6. Initial sketch of the set for Baylor University Theatre's *Nora*.

Given the uniqueness of the Mabee's layout, this design appropriately dealt with the vertical height of the proscenium arch and horizontal depth of the thrust space, two

problems which needed to be solved. However, after studying it carefully, I found several prominent features that either were not present, or needed more development. As “mod” as the design was, it was missing the filter of a six-year-old’s perspective—a crucial aspect of the production concept. When I approached the designer with a list of suggestions, he generously and positively responded to the points I made.

With the collaborative tone set, we continued to bounce new and old ideas back and forth until we had discussed the merits of each point and its potential solutions. Due to the specificity and clarity we achieved during this conversation, it was only 48 hours later when I received a revised second scenic design, which was largely kept for the final production.

The majority of the changes reflected the subtle shift of the design toward the dollhouse aesthetic. The set was reduced to an open space single story floor plan, which created an uncluttered field of view where each area was clearly delineated. The foyer, enlarged by the retraction of the doorway, was developed to include previously missing scenic elements, such as a mailbox, an aluminum Christmas tree, a fireplace, a record player, and a screen for Nora’s last onstage costume change. The main living room was sunken and covered with plush carpeting. The large open space previously occupied by the bed was now filled with large pane-glass windows. But most importantly, a small raised platform was included downstage left to demarcate Emmy’s room, which now housed an A-frame dollhouse that emulated the shape of the Helmers’ home.



Figs. 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9. *Nora* scenic design development, from rendering to model to production.

One of the larger changes came from my desire to reintroduce Bergman's convention of keeping the cast onstage for the entire play. In order to reconcile this idea with the concept, I encouraged the scenic designer to look at drawers and storage areas incorporated into mid-century dollhouses. To accommodate this request, the scenic designer added in 4-foot-wide troughs (later dubbed the "no spaces") to the left and right flanks of the main playing area. Set down several inches below the stage, these areas providing a clear boundary between the main playing space and the "no space," in which actors waited like dolls to be brought into the action. Non-descript seating would be provided for the actors (Figs. 3.10 and 3.11) and, originally small drawers were to be included in the design, which would house necessary props and costumes.



Figs. 3.10 and 3.11. Actors seated to stage left and stage right in production.

Another important alteration was the complete removal of the second level bedroom and the attached stairway. The scenic designer conceded that the placement of the bedroom right above the front door had the unfortunate effect of creating an obvious visual metaphor for Nora's choices. With that bed present from the start of the production, and used for such a small scene transition, it became increasingly difficult to

justify. As we mulled over options, I realized I could stage Torvald and Nora having sex on the couch in the living room, thus removing the need for the bedroom element completely. The sense of danger and voyeurism engendered by using the couch as a marital bed felt right in line with the presence of Emmy.¹⁰ The additional space gained from eliminating the bed also created room to push back the front doors to a more stable and imposing position in the back wall. This alteration allowed the scenic designer and I to reimagine the “door slam” for which *A Doll’s House* is so famous.

Following Bergman’s lead on this final moment of *Nora* was a non-starter. For the 1981 Munich production, Bergman had a side door hidden in the wood paneling to one of the side of the stage. Once Nora finished her final line, the door popped open and she exited. In 1989, Bergman tried a new ending. This time, with Hilde watching, Nora avoided the door altogether by walking down off the stage and out through the theatre itself, leaving audiences confused and frustrated. As recent productions of *Nora* indicate, other directors have also been unsure how to properly conclude the show. The Westport Country Playhouse production in 2014 followed Bergman’s implied suggestion, ending the show by having Nora walk offstage while leaving Torvald standing fully nude in a spotlight. This choice prompted one reviewer to note: “There is no door-slamming by Nora...rather, there is an ending that suggests more than the play delivers, a visual

¹⁰ In fact, this choice to omit the obvious metaphor of the looming bedroom may have been a fortuitous one. The set design for the 2015 Cherry Lane production prominently featured a bed which remained onstage the entire show. In his review, Samuel Leiter dismissively singled out its presence as “that tired symbol again.” See, Leiter, “Snorer,” *Theatre’s Leiter Side*, November 27, 2015. <http://sleiter.blogspot.com/2015/11/108-review-nora-seen-november-25-2015.html>

metaphor that simply does not ring true.”¹¹ None of the Bergmanesque solutions struck me as particularly inspired, and the usual door slam felt too predictable, so more exciting alternatives were sought in order to symbolize the finality of Nora’s escape. In order to fully envision an entirely new ending sequence, I enlisted the help of the scenic designer.

Inspired by Bergman’s large photographic backgrounds in the 1989 production, my initial impulse was to have Nora rip through the door at the end of the show. I was attracted to the idea of Nora’s absence ripping a hole in this domestic scene and the implication that the barrier keeping her trapped was a weak one. I remained attached to the idea of the fabric door until late in the design process, although my scenic designer (along with other designers) attempted to dissuade me from using less impactful materials. Each iteration of the breakaway door—be it fabric or paper or plastic or glass—failed to match the symbolic weight of Ibsen’s door slam. Also, the sudden shift from realism to fantastical theatricality on Nora’s part felt incongruous when compared to the rest of her character arc. However, through my production concept, I had created a character who could breach those two dimensions—Emmy.

Reimagining the final argument between Nora and Torvald as heard by Emmy provided the last puzzle piece to understanding how to destroy the doors of the Helmers’ home. After some discussion, it was decided that the event would be a dual-fold one. First, after Nora’s final “Goodbye,” Emmy would angrily punch through the doors of her dollhouse, shattering the illusory world she had created in her mind. This would reverberate through the actual house itself, causing the front doors of the home to burst

¹¹ Geary Danihy, “*Nora* adrift in time and place is no *Doll*,” review of *Nora*, as performed at the Westport Country Playhouse, *Westport News*, July 20, 2014. <http://www.westport-news.com/news/article/Westport-Playhouse-review-Nora-adrift-in-time-5633688.php>

inward off their hinges, slamming to the ground. Instead of doors made of flimsy material that could easily be destroyed, the scenic designer drew up plans to make them out of metal and wood. Crushable doorknobs were created from spray-painted Styrofoam cups to minimize damage to the wood paneled flooring. Additionally, small square plates were affixed to the door via magnets, in hopes of them scattering across the stage as the doors fell in the final *coup de théâtre*. This unexpectedly new take on the problem would serve to surprise audience members who knew the end of Ibsen's play as well as those who didn't.

The final moment of the front doors flying open, supported by Emmy punching her dollhouse doors inward, worked well on paper. Once the scenic designer and director had okayed the final plan—one door braced to fall by the other door which would be forced open with a lever—the technical director and his team of student assistants began work on creating the final moment. However, realizing this idea in three dimensions was problematic well into performances. No matter how many drills of the door slam the team ran, it continued to either get stuck or fall too easily. Realizing the perilous nature of actors being near an unpredictable scenic element, the stage manager started requesting a stagehand to stand behind the door literally using his body as a counterbalance for the last scene of the play to hold it up once it was unbraced during the prior scene transition. Although the mechanics of the door never quite were executed with a satisfactory proficiency, the theatrical effect they created was more than worth the headache.

Costume Design

While the director-designer relationship with the scenic designer was characterized by free and open lines of communication, the faculty costume designer

assigned to *Nora* required a far more formal and procedural approach when it came to collaboration. Due to prior professional commitments, he was largely unavailable during the summer term outside of the two production meetings. In those, he was the first and most frequent to ask detailed questions about the production concept (a process he and I later dubbed “kicking the tires”). Outside of those meetings, our small amount of interaction was relegated to email missives that most often were full of questions and sent to the entire design team.

Initially, the costume designer expressed hesitation for the production concept, due in large part to a fundamental misunderstanding of its application. He was under the impression that using Emmy would create a “puppet master” dynamic in which the characters would be treated as literal dolls, which tonally did not fit his reading of the play. At first, this distanced attitude came as a direct challenge to my positivist peacemaker mentality. His dissension was largely treated with humor by the rest of the team. However, it became clear that his support for the directorial approach was necessary for a cohesive design.

Recognizing the impasse, I reiterated to the entire team that Emmy’s perspective was to be used as a design filter for the realistic world of the play rather than a direct one-to-one correlation to doll aesthetics. Then, to better speak the language of the costume designer, I created short realistic biographies that grounded each character in the historical context of early twentieth century America. This effort to meet him on level ground allowed him to reconsider and fully support the concept. Once the “tires had been kicked” enough, the designer spent the rest of the summer break in relative isolation, with the goal of pulling primary research images for each of the characters.

When we reconvened for the first face-to-face production meeting, the collaborative process with the costume designer hit another snag. As the scenic designer presented his renderings of the approved set, the costume designer became visibly more and more upset with some of the “mod” design aspects. When the time came for him to present his first sketches of the show’s costumes, he explained them in a terse and perfunctory way, indicating that he would need to return to the drawing board having seen the set. After the meeting, I asked the scenic designer and the costume designer to speak to the concerns raised during the scenic presentation. After hearing each designer defend their choices, I came to realize that the fault lay with me. Both designers had clearly heard me request designs to reflect the year 1959, but both had approached it from different directions. Ultimately the problem was a simple (though not inconsequential) one. Essentially, the scenic design was reflective of domestic designs of late 1950s (as would have been popular in architecture), while the realistic approach to costumes accounted for the lag in fashion which left them reflective of the designs from the mid 1950s. This five-year gap in aesthetics was just wide enough to create an inconsistent tone in the world of the play. Through careful negotiation, I was able to get both men to agree to compromise and meet the designs in the middle. The resulting changes seemed to satisfy each party, though beyond toning down the color of the couch and loveseat, I could not identify any other major shifts.

Despite this rocky start, over the course of the design and rehearsal process, I came to see the costume designer not as an adversary, but an advocate. His poking and prodding of the concept was done in line with a close reading of Bergman’s script. Of all the designers, he was the one who was consistently defended the play as well as our

production. When we started meeting face-to-face back at Baylor, I came to realize that the designer's seemingly objective approach to the Emmy-centric element of the production was far more emotionally attached than I first thought. Most notably, his sympathetic view of the character of Nora augmented my own, providing an important counterbalance to the dismissive attitudes toward her that had surfaced in many members of the production staff. The costume designer's input not only resulted in a clearer and more unified production, but also urged me toward a more confident approach to my directorial style.

One of the benefits of *Nora*'s small cast size was that each character received a larger amount of the costume staff's time and attention than generally given to characters in a larger ensemble show or musical. For production, the costume designer focused on costuming Nora, Emmy, Torvald and Dr. Rank, while his assistant, a student apprentice, handled Krogstad and Mrs. Linde.

Between the primary research phase and the first sketches, the costume designer and I met to discuss the individual development of each character's style. Each of the elements of costuming—line, shape, form, volume, and mass—would be used. An agreement was reached to avoid the warmth and hipness of traditional Barbie doll aesthetics. Instead, the lines and forms of the costumes would incorporate elements of winter. This choice allowed the designers to envision layers of costumes (a crucial component for later onstage quick changes) and pay homage to the heavier clothing of Ibsen's Norway.

This meeting also revealed a mutual interest in the significance of how color can be used in costuming. Given the dream-like quality of the world of *Nora*, the association

of specific colors with specific characters and emotions served as a way of establishing a potent visual vocabulary between the designer, the director, and the audience. Reds, seen largely in Nora and Emmy's first-act costumes, became indicators of both femininity and childishness. Blues, found in the suits worn by Krogstad and Torvald, suggested adulthood, tinged with masculinity. Mrs. Linde's purple dresses situated her right between these two worlds. The formal tuxedos worn by Dr. Rank and Torvald in the second act became harbingers of the stark, black and white social attitude that dominates the end of the play.

In contrast, the appearance of the color green came to symbolize hope—an intentional homage to Strindberg's *A Dream Play*, which used the same color-emotion association.¹² Dr. Rank wore a plaid green vest in the first act prior to Nora's rejection of his love. It also showed up in the second through the dark forest green 1960s style coat Nora put on before leaving in the final scene. In another serendipitous moment, a green suit was mistakenly ordered online for Krogstad's second-act look. The assistant designer had believed the material to be dark navy blue, but upon arrival, the suit was clearly a burnished emerald. However, given Krogstad's reconciliation with Mrs. Linde in the scene when the costume was worn, the green/hope association was strengthened rather than diminished.

Because Bergman's production did not feature an intermission, it also largely eschewed major costume changes. Originally, the Baylor production was also planned to

¹² Having directing *A Dream Play* no less than five times during his career, Bergman too was aware of this association. In his 1984 television production *After the Rehearsal*, Bergman's grown-up alter ego, Henrik Vogler, is in the process of directing the Strindbergian drama. The establishing shot of the man is from above, looking down upon his desk. On the table is a green lamp, a prompt book, and a copy of Strindberg's Collected Works with a green binding.

run without an intermission. Yet, when early reads of the script clocked in at 100 minutes, several members of the production staff encouraged a reconsideration of this idea.

The most appropriate place for a large-scale costume change was between scenes eleven and twelve. Placing an intermission here had the benefit of creating a clear act break, which amplified the emotional content of the play. Act I was then ended with Nora's exhausting performance of the tarantella to distract Torvald from discovering Krogstad's letter in the mailbox. Act II resumed with a short dialogue between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad before the Helmers and Dr. Rank returned from the masquerade. Given the circumstances suggested by the text, the intermission also provided an opportunity for a complete wardrobe change to coincide with the definitive tonal shift between the two halves. Taking full advantage of the break, the costume designer created distinct first and second act costumes for each character.

Feeling freed from the constraints of Bergman's unchanging costume palette, the designer and I looked for an opportunity for one more costume change in order to delineate the time shift indicated by the scenes now making up the first act. The designers quickly realized that any other costume changes would be complicated by the fact that the characters never left the stage. The scenic designer reminded the costume designer that the "no spaces" were designed to support the addition of simple drawers in Nora's "Day Two" costume could be stored. This ultimately proved unnecessary as Nora's first costume was designed to simply fit over her second costume. During the transition between scenes five and six, the other characters performed minor costume adjustments in order to complete the sense of the passage of time. Simple, yet elegant solutions like

this characterized much of the final phase of collaboration as the designs were prepared for construction.

Hair and Make-up Design

Partnered with and complementing the work by the costume department, hair and make-up designs were handled by a student designer and developed around the same aesthetic principles. Much of the actual collaboration with the make-up designer was set to occur after casting. When she enthusiastically made mention of how much she loved the style of the 1950s and couldn't wait to begin primary research, I reiterated one single request—"avoid Barbie." With this boundary established, I was able to collaborate with the designer in a largely hands-off way, given her detailed understanding of the period.

The aesthetic principles of the 1950s created a very clear "look" for each sex. After casting, the men were encouraged to grow out their hair, which would be cut and styled prior to dress rehearsals. Krogstad and Torvald were asked to shave regularly for performance, while the actor playing Dr. Rank was allowed to maintain a well-kept beard in order to suggest an age difference between him and his contemporaries. Wigs were considered for the women, but ultimately their hair was styled and pinned for the show. The actress playing Emmy cut her hair to create bangs which were popular in children's fashion during the 1950s.

Make-up was largely designed to capture the era of the 1950s while also emulating the smooth features of dolls. The final designs jettisoned much of the doll look as it created an unsettling sheen of plasticity on the actor's skin. The actress playing Nora had a large amount of freckles, which were able to be hidden through a liberal application

of foundation. Both Dr. Rank and Krogstad were given make-up treatments to indicate their respective conditions of ill health and general agitation.

The elements of hair and make-up are not traditionally included in the first night of dress rehearsals at Baylor. During our first *Nora* dress rehearsal, the costume designer kept sighing loudly and taking notes when actors appeared with contemporary hair styles and minimal make-up. The following night, when the actors appeared in costume with the hair and make-up designs of the era fully realized, the costumer breathed a sigh of relief. Having never considered it from a costumer's point of view, I recognized how important these elements are, not just on their own but in collaboration with the other aspects of design to create a sense of visual unity.

Prop Design and Management

Even though Bergman worked to strip away the realistic elements of *A Doll's House*, a cursory glance at the necessary props referenced in the script for *Nora* suggests a different story. In order to evoke the 1959 atmosphere of the Baylor production of *Nora*, the properties would need to compliment the work of the scenic and costuming elements in achieving a cohesive unity of period appropriate style. To accomplish this, the ideal properties designer would serve in triangular collaboration with the director and the scenic designer, while possessing a keen aesthetic sense in translating the props of 1870s to the late 1950s. Regretfully, the student assigned to the show in this design element had none of these abilities.

Due to budgetary and faculty constraints, the props department at Baylor tends to be among the lower tiers of the design hierarchy. The particular student chosen to serve as prop designer for *Nora* was tasked to the show with the caveat that her faculty mentor

would provide a watchful eye over her process. Yet, instead of being an integral collaborator in the establishment of the show's style, many times the props designer served as an unpredictable obstacle.

One of the major problems was found in the impossibility of establishing a reliable mode of communication with the designer. The student's schedule allowed her to work only during a three-hour window of time on weekday afternoons—which was a time when I was frequently off-campus and away from the theatre. Dealing with a student designer, I should have made myself more available during that timeframe or been more clear with options to contact me. Without my input, the designer would then either a) completely forget about the item until it was brought up later or b) make decisions about the prop by herself.

To complicate matters, this latter tendency to purchase items without being vetted led to a nearly disastrous use of the props budget. As the action of *Nora* calls for the consumption of several macaroons, a sizable portion of the budget was allotted to buying the cookies as the performance dates neared. On a personal shopping trip during an early rehearsal week, the props designer found authentic macaroons at a local bakery. Even though we were not yet ready to incorporate the consumables, she purchased a bag of them at a higher price point than the budget could sustain. After a strict reprimand from her faculty mentor, she then located much more affordable macaroons on the clearance shelf at a local grocery store. The faculty mentor approved the purchase, under the assumption that the cookies would be stored safely in the props kitchen and saved for performance. Unfortunately, students not associated with the production of *Nora* were allowed access to the storage area. They proceeded to eat the macaroons, claiming that

they been told that any food in the area was available for consumption. The props designer then had to return to the bakery to purchase the more expensive macaroons for performance. Thankfully, the cost was ultimately covered by a surplus in the scenic budget.

Feeling the mounting pressures of time and the failure of the student to develop any aesthetic discretion, I approached her faculty mentor and requested that several of the more detail oriented property jobs be contracted out to other members of the design team. Luckily, the prop designer saw this redistribution of duties as a relief rather than an act of infringement. In fact, she remarked how glad she was to have other collaborators involved. Following this, I asked a senior member of the costume faculty whom I trusted to assume the responsibilities of the design and detail of the clothing and hair styling of Emmy's dolls. The construction of Emmy's dollhouse was subsequently assigned to one of the assistant scenic designers, who was already familiar with the intricacies of the Helmer household from building the set model.

As we approached technical rehearsals, many of the rehearsal props remained onstage with no performance substitutes having been acquired. During one late stage rehearsal, the scenic designer threw his notepad on the ground when Nora pulled out an unwrapped cardboard box wrapped in colorful tape. A similar situation occurred when the scenic designer saw the prop designer's solution for the shopping bags which Nora carried in at the top of the show. Instead of researching and purchasing 1950s paper department store bags, the props designer bought contemporary J.C. Penney bags and attempted to spray paint them brown. It was during this time that I had to step in and serve as a mediator between the props designer and other members of the design team.

After the second technical rehearsal, during which several unsuitable rehearsal props still appeared onstage, it took a concerted effort to avoid the scenic designer dressing down the props designer. After the rehearsal, the stage manager and I had to literally point out every item onstage that did not fit the era before the props designer was able to visually understand which props still needed to be replaced.

Once *Nora* opened, the properties that had been approved to be onstage looked authentic and helped create a polished unified aesthetic look. Even still, during one performance, I realized that the new period appropriate shopping bags had barcode stickers stuck to the bottom which could be seen when Nora lifted them up—one last detail which had snuck past our collective radar.

Lighting Design

The design elements of scenery, costuming, props, and hair and make-up exist in three dimensions, and as such, require some degree of material realism in order to be fully realized. Being far less tangible, lighting and sound allow for more experimentation as aspects of design. It was apparent that my collaborations with these designers were crucial in the development of the non-realistic elements of the production concept.

In most cases, lighting design is one of the last technical aspects of a show to be added into rehearsals at Baylor University. Thus, varying degrees of faith and trust are required when collaborating with a lighting designer. A successful relationship relies on clear communication in the early stages and a shared comfortability with deferring a visible design until technical rehearsals.

Luckily, my student lighting designer was immediately onboard with the overall production concept. During our initial conversations, he was particularly responsive to

the “dreamplay” idea, often characterizing scenes with somnial descriptions, such as “the lullaby” or “the nightmare.” With no mention of Bergman’s original lighting design in the research on *Nora*, the lighting designer seized the opportunity to create a complex and expressionistic visual approach to Emmy’s mindscape.

One of the most stunning aspects of the lighting for *Nora* was the designer’s use of the small windows, which fill the A-frame structure of the back wall. In the middle of the scenic designer’s initial presentation of scenic images for the production, the lighting designer began furiously taking notes and drawing preliminary sketches. As the discussion unfolded about the texture and color of the windows, the designer begged the technical director to leave them opaque and white. As his lighting plot took shape, the designer gave the windows dazzling versatility by lighting each one with its own individual LED instrument. This ingenuous idea essentially turned the wall into a giant canvas on which he could paint with lighting. This design choice earned the student tremendous respect from the rest of the design team and encouraged them to take similarly bold risks in their own developing designs.

While the designer was not able to display the actual lighting cues in the space at that time, he did create detailed digital renderings of the show’s most visually interesting moments. His ability to clearly articulate his design ideas as images allowed me to respond to his inspired visual interpretation of the play well before I traditionally would have seen it at technical rehearsals. He claimed the clarity in my vision of the show acted as a catalyst for him to imagine the diversity of looks and mood he was able to create in the final production.



Figs. 3.12 and 3.13. Original lighting rendering design in comparison to production design.

This proactive approach was reflected in his inexhaustible work ethic, as evidenced when he began to hang, focus, and program the lights. After final polishing rehearsals and early technical rehearsals, the designer often stayed behind until the early hours of the morning in order to program lighting cues. At technical rehearsals, he was at the board, ready to adjust cue timing or intensity with lightning fast response.

The only problem that arose with lighting was not of a directorial nature, but rather created by poor scheduling. As technical rehearsals approached, the construction of the A-frame structure fell behind the target date. This one missed deadline created a ripple effect that not only impacted other facets of the scenic crew (who were still attempting to hang the large ceiling element), but also forced a delay in the scheduled hang and focus for the lighting instruments. Yet even this obstacle was unable to slow down the lighting designer, who continued to work until opening night to perfect our shared vision of *Nora*.

Sound Design

Throughout my directorial career, my theatrical ear has developed just as strongly (if not more so) than my theatrical eye. As such, my previous experience designing the soundscape of shows I have directed has become an important part of my pre-production process. My hands-on approach to sound design had the potential to create conflict during *Nora*, which had an assigned sound designer. Thus, my approaches to collaboration with the sound designer focused on engendering mutual respect for each other's talents and setting clear boundaries for my own process.

To help establish this collegial atmosphere, I suggested that before our first face-to-face meeting, both the sound designer and I compile our own playlists for the show.

By finding music and sounds independently, our first listen-through allowed our aural selections to do the heavy lifting of the first director-designer conversation. This process served to provoke initial conversations about the show, highlight shared musical interests, and establish a unique potential soundscape for the show.

The sound designer had honed in on a variety of popular songs of the late 1950s sung by female artists. As we listened, his thematic interests became clear. Several of the songs had lyrics detailing women's childlike relationships with men. He completed his soundtrack with several iconic Christmas songs by artists like Bobby Vinton and Bing Crosby that suggested the nostalgic emotion of American Christmases past. In the few places the sound designer had made the leap to link songs to specific moments in the script, the music served a very clear role in navigating the realism of the major dramatic action. This "found music" approach came to inform our decision to place a record player in Emmy's room. This device, which mirrored the larger stereo in the Helmers' living room, imbued the character of Emmy with some agency to influence the soundscape of the show.

If the sound designer's music choices could be heard as a soundtrack for the production, my choices were closer to that of a film score. The list I had compiled was of a far more experimental vein, populated by instrumental music by artists like Steve Reich and Max Richter. Other choices included distorted instrumental versions of classic Christmas music. In locating specific musical moments in the script, my intention was to wield songs as either ironic commentary or underscoring for the play's more expressionistic moments. For example, a snippet of the doo-wop 1950s song "Christmas Letter" by Kitty and the La Fetts, which appeared on this initial playlist, was used to

juxtapose the emotion of the moment when Krogstad finally drops his letter into the Helmers' mailbox. One of the earliest pieces I designed for this preshow list (which also made it to final performance, to underscore the pivotal Nora/Torvald sex scene) was an unsettling mixture of two disparate versions of "Silent Night"—a slowed-down recording of Sammy Kaye's somber choral version overlaid with a cover of the song featuring only a disquieting electric guitar.

Between these two different stylistic approaches, the sound designer was able to begin assembling a master list of music that captured the realistic and anti-realistic elements that resulted from framing Bergman's script with our unique production concept. Had either of us simply abdicated responsibility to the other, this playful integration of our musical inspirations would have been lost, and the design would surely have suffered. Our busy schedules kept us from meeting every week, yet the master list continued to grow as we each added tracks to use as potential cues.

The only hiccup in the otherwise highly productive and respectful mode of collaboration between the designer and director occurred two days before technical rehearsals began. Due to some unforeseen complications, the sound designer had not been able to attend any rehearsals outside of the first designer run several weeks before. During this time, I had staged the prologue, epilogue, and several important transitions with pieces of music that he and I had tacitly agreed upon in creating the master list. In hopes of making the paper tech and first technical rehearsal as smooth as possible, I compiled a short document of the 20 sound cues I being used and sent it to the designer and stage manager. The goal of the document was to be as specific as possible, so I listed track names, fade in and fade out times, play times, and suggested volume levels. After

receiving the document, the stage manager responded positively, while briefly noting that a few of the cues listed on the designer's preliminary cue sheet (submitted a few weeks prior) would need some adjusting.

The sound designer, however, responded negatively, interpreting the document as a crossing of the line in the sand between my duties as director and his as sound designer. It was immediately clear to me that the unspoken boundary of our collaborative relationship had been breached. I learned later that his reaction had its foundation in previous relationships with "collaborative" directors, who shut down any mutual respect by sending a similarly specific cue sheet full of demands rather than suggestions.

Ultimately, the final cue list for performance was nearly identical to the cue sheet I had sent earlier. However, by extending a bit of psychological freedom to my sound designer in the approach to technical rehearsals, our collaborative relationship was as strong as ever moving into technical rehearsals and performance. The result of this was a sound design that was, according to faculty and patrons, both powerful and memorable and one of the best uses of sound design in recent Baylor Theatre productions.

Design Presentation

The first phase of the design process culminated with a department-wide design presentation on October 2, 2015. This gathering provided an opportunity for the design team to give Baylor Theatre students and faculty a sneak peek at the production concept. Prior to the *Nora* presentation, the designers consolidated their research images and the final sketches and renderings of their individual elements. The production stage manager then put together a PowerPoint, which would accompany each designer as they briefly spoke at the gathering.

Given the distance of our production concept from the traditional designs of *A Doll's House*, I provided a short introduction that bridged Bergman's original production to ours. Each designer (or their student assistants) then spoke for a few minutes with professionalism, clarity, and excitement, which gave the event an air of unification. Students and faculty unanimously responded to the production concept with great enthusiasm. One faculty member remarked that he felt it was the most cohesive presentation he had seen during his time in the department. While the sketches and renderings themselves were certainly visually and aurally stunning, it was clear that our colleagues were responding most to the supportive and collaborative spirit that had come to characterize our design team.

Conclusion

When I first started to visualize *Nora*, I was unable to imagine any better design than Bergman's original. However, the team of designers assigned to the Baylor production helped break this aesthetic paralysis. Bringing together the design team with a clear and unified concept served as a solid beginning to effective collaboration. This firm foundation allowed me to confidently give direction to the designers while also providing the framework for a dramatic world in which they could explore their personal creativity. Together, we envisioned and realized a production which was harmonious, cohesive, aesthetically pleasing, and visually stunning. However, before my directorial work could be considered a complete success, I needed to find and cast actors through which Bergman's script and the various design elements could be fully realized.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Rehearsal Process

Introduction

When once asked about the details of his directorial process, Ingmar Bergman playfully retorted that, “an immense amount goes on between the actors and me that cannot be analyzed.”¹ Without directly naming it, Bergman is hinting at the unique type of collaboration that exists between a director and actor. The 1981 Residenztheatre production of *Nora* has largely been recognized as a “decisive turning point” in Bergman’s use of the actor.² Granted, this turning point was the result of four years of intense and frequent collaboration between the Swedish director and his German actors. For the Baylor production of *Nora*, the director and actors were given four weeks of rehearsal before the technical elements were added. Because of the demands of this condensed schedule, any consideration of *Nora*’s rehearsal process requires close attention to be paid to the development of the actor-director relationship.

This chapter aims to trace the progression of this collaborative partnership—from auditions to final technical rehearsals—during the weeks leading up to *Nora*’s opening night. Additional emphasis will be placed on how the realistic and anti-realistic elements present in Bergman’s script contributed to decisions on casting, staging, the creation of the character of Emmy, and the cultivation of an effective ensemble.

¹ Marker and Marker, *Life*, xvii.

² *Ibid.*, 243.

Auditions

Unfortunately for the development of a collaborative atmosphere, the first contact between director and actor often happens in the environment of the audition room. Every aspect of the audition room creates a one-sided power dynamic which emphasizes the power of the director over the actor. In preparing for auditions, it was essential for the director to find ways to equalize this power imbalance in order to carefully and quickly select the six actors necessary for the production. Given the unique style demands of *Nora*, actors that were to be considered for casting needed to be successful in three areas. First, performers needed to be adept at handling aspects of psychological realism found in the dramatic action of *A Doll's House*, and thus *Nora*. Second, they would need to demonstrate an ability to navigate the metatheatrical devices demanded by Bergman's adaptation and enhanced by the production concept. Third, the six actors chosen for the cast would be expected to participate in the creation of a collaborative ensemble, which is a fundamental aspect of my directorial process. With these needs in mind, auditions were set to occur over three weekday evenings in mid-September.

As auditions approached, the Baylor production preceding *Nora* experienced unexpected delays, requiring additional time with technical personnel and performers. To accommodate the necessary scheduling adjustments, the *Nora* audition process shortened to two days. Furthermore, several of the Baylor acting faculty requested that the first day of *Nora* auditions also serve as a departmental cattle call. This meant every Baylor University performance major in the freshman, sophomore, and junior classes, as well as a great number of seniors, would need to be seen within a reasonably short amount of time. To deal with time limitations, short monologues from Bergman's script for *Nora*

were selected and provided as the mandated audition material. After viewing each auditioner on the first night, I cut the list of potential cast members to a group of 30 actors who were invited to callbacks the next evening.

The second day started with a short group warm-up, followed by a brief exercise focused on collective creation. Students were divided into groups of six and asked to create five compositional tableaux related to the characters for which they were auditioning. This portion of the callback was used to gauge the actors' creativity and responsiveness to this collaborative approach. After this exercise, the rest of the callback consisted of actor pairings presenting cold readings of two-person scenes meant to assess the actors' ability to carry the demands of the text. Throughout the evening, two members of the Baylor Theatre faculty provided informed opinions on actors being seriously considered for casting. During the callbacks, the best choices for the characters of Emmy, Torvald, Dr. Rank, Mrs. Linde, and Krogstad became clear. However, a definitive choice on the actress who could perform the role of Nora continued to be elusive. As callbacks wound down, my directing mentor encouraged me to worry less about visuals and listen to which voices go together. This suggestion called to mind critic Leif Zern's description of *Nora* as "chamber music for five voices."³

The final choice for Nora was largely a leap of faith. The three actresses who were in consideration each provided important aspects of the character, but none had every quality for which I was looking. In the end, I cast the actress who had experience in devised ensemble work, making her the most adept at working not as a subservient artist, but as a true collaborator.

³ Zern, *Expressen*.

First Read-through

The importance of a first rehearsal cannot be overstated. With any group of actors, the read-through is often seen as a symbol of the production itself. A well-organized, creative, structured reading of the script instills the entire production crew with a belief that the future rehearsals will share those qualities. In a theatre program where students' attentions are pulled in multiple directions, this first rehearsal becomes even more important in setting the appropriate tone.

After the actors filled out the requisite paperwork for the production stage manager, I spoke briefly and enthusiastically about the conceptual approach to the play. We touched on the notion of the play's chiasmic structure, which elicited positive responses from the cast. By having this idea in their head from the outset, the group was able to start actively seeking out important plot points and their correlation during the first read-through. During the second half of this rehearsal, the cast was introduced to Viewpoints exercises, designed to help build the ensemble that was so crucial to my process.

Viewpoints is a contemporary approach to theatrical composition, focused on a skillful handling of a short list of spatial and temporal elements. The Viewpoints were developed by theatremakers Anne Bogart and Tina Landau by adapting the work of choreographer Mary Overlie. Like any rehearsal strategy, the technique has its champions and detractors. At its best, the Viewpoints serves as a means of collaboration between actors and directors which generates "viscerally dynamic moments in the theatre."⁴ At its worst and most misunderstood, Viewpoints can be, as one professor termed it,

⁴ Anne Bogart, qtd. in Joan Herrington, "Directing with the Viewpoints," *Theatre Topics* 10.2 (2000): 156.

theatrically masturbatory. Some of my previous applications of the technique as a director at Baylor were foiled by a desire to simply make something happen, or worse, be so concerned with how the process looked in my own head that I failed to see the work happening onstage. After refining my approach to using Viewpoints, I have come to understand how to employ it to augment my process, not replace it entirely.

To bridge the gap between this experimental mode of work and the approach of Bergman, I introduced my cast to the notion of the “magic point.” Bergman believed every theatrical space had an actual location “where the actor is best and most effectively located.”⁵ Curiously, Bergman suggests this magic point is rarely related to the building’s architecture or the play’s scenic elements. Furthermore, for it to be effective for a director and actor, it has to be consciously located by the collective group. In order to find the Mabee Theater’s magic point, I asked the actors to first explore the space individually. After several potential spots had been identified, the group was tasked to work together to pinpoint one definitive location. The spot they chose was a small circle about three feet left and one and a half feet downstage from the center point of the Mabee’s thrust stage. This point fell within an area that has been described as an acoustic anomaly within the Mabee’s structure. Speaking while within this circle amplifies an actor’s voice in such a way that it projects to the entire audience. Without any prompting, the group broke into an acapella rendition of *Silent Night* to test our magic point.⁶

Bergman suggests that “approach and withdrawal effects” (his terms for “strong” and “weak” movements in blocking) should all be coordinated in relation to the magic

⁵ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 16.

⁶ As noted before, this was the song that was being considered to underscore Emmy overhearing the final sexual encounter between Nora and Torvald that ends scene fourteen.

point.⁷ With this in mind, I asked the cast to move about the space and, without consulting their scripts, to grab a line of the *Nora* text that they remembered from the read-through. One by one, they returned to the magic point to speak their line. After each actor had completed that demand, I asked them to move about the space and have encounters with the other characters. Every time two actors came into close proximity to one another, one would speak his or her line, followed by the response of the other actor. This sequence continued until each character combination had been exhausted. We continued this process several times. Each repetition of the exercise focused on one of the following states that were pertinent to the show—fear, love, anger, pain, and humor. Through this process, our production’s unique web of relationships was built strand by strand.

In a post-exercise feedback session, the actors commented how the repetition of line and character encounter helped them to push beyond their initial interpretation of the play and start to find emotional nuances. One cast member remarked that she was going to take some of the exercises into a post-*Nora* rehearsal for a short piece she was directing. Three others explicitly sought me out before they left to say they could not wait to start blocking. Another commented on how they had never left a first rehearsal feeling as excited and hopeful for a show. It was clear that this non-traditional approach had already created a degree of intimacy in our fledgling ensemble.

Blocking Rehearsals

The first phase of the rehearsal process focused on combining elements of basic table work and blocking. Blocking serves to create a basic structural framework of the

⁷ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 16.

main action and major relationships of the play, often through the creation of effective stage pictures. The process is seen as a prerequisite of staging, which comes later and is focused on filling in that structure with more detailed action.

The creation of the initial rehearsal schedule was guided by two notions: 1) the desire to explore the play's chiasmic structure; and 2) Bergman's belief that "with this play, you must always start at the end...then you can go forward from there."⁸ Emphasizing the chiasmic analysis, the first eight blocking rehearsals were structured to focus on blocking two corresponding scenes a night. This highly unconventional approach forced the actors to work scenes in isolation and to defer any sense of overall cohesion for character arcs. This also meant that the development of Emmy would be put on hold until the primary blocking of Bergman's text was finished.

However, this approach also provided a few unexpected benefits that ultimately made it worth the time. First, since most corresponding scenes featured the same actors (often only two at a time), fewer cast members were called to rehearsal each night, which reduced the amount of time some actors were not being utilized. Second, the connections between each scene suggested by the chiasmic analysis became far clearer for the actors when investigated in this manner. And third, setting aside two hours for each scene allowed for the actors to assume a more exploratory attitude during this first phase of rehearsals.

There is no clear-cut way for directors or actors to approach blocking. Some actors prefer a hands-on choreographic approach, in which the director provides guided structure for movement onstage. Others actors prefer to find their own way, first through

⁸ Marker and Marker, *Project*, 12.



Fig. 4.1. A moment during blocking rehearsals with Nora, Mrs. Linde, and Dr. Rank.

discussion and later through a process consisting largely of trial and error. As the rehearsal process for *Nora* began, it became clear that the small cast was varied in their blocking preferences. To ensure that all the actors' needs were met, I established a basic rehearsal pattern that favored aspects of each process. First, the actors would read through for a basic understanding of the main action. Then, I would lead the cast through a period of table work designed to uncover major tonal shifts in each scene. Following a second read through for deeper comprehension, the actors were encouraged to get up on their feet. It was at this point that I deployed one of the most productive tools in the Viewpoints arsenal—the creation of improvised tableaux.

While I have had extensive experience working with this method of blocking in devised work, I was inspired to revisit it for *Nora* in order to capture some of the cinematic qualities of Bergman's script. Traditionally when it comes to composition, the director is often seen as the play's sole painter, or photographer, who must possess an artist's eye. However, the Viewpoints work requires actor and director to work together to create what director Brian Hansen identifies as a "frame-by-frame" picturization for the audience.⁹ The tableau is a static image, which presents a single "frame" and focuses on creating a dynamic representation of each individual moment of action within a scene.

Initially, my hope was that the actors would use the tableaux work to delve into the composition of more abstract, dynamic stage pictures. However, the actors (most comfortable in Stanislavski-based realism) opted to generate tableaux that tended to be more literal representations of action and relationship. While not as visually exciting as I had first hoped, these basic stage pictures proved to be raw material that could easily be converted into the more dynamic compositions I wanted in later rehearsals. On many occasions, what first appeared to be a very pedestrian tableau would actually be imbued with symbolic tension when fully realized later in the rehearsal process.

Once this first pass at blocking was completed, actors walked through the scene trying to find movement patterns that synced up to their static tableaux. If there was not any internal action in the beat, I encouraged the actors to try to hold their position until the next major shift. This work helped rein in the commonplace desire to just wander about the set, which seems to be a habit found in most young actors.

⁹ Brian Hansen, *Theatre: The Dynamics of the Art* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1986), 146.

As new combinations of actors were called for each of the initial rehearsals, the blocking process progressed slowly at first. The start of each rehearsal required the new pairs of actors to test the process yet again in order to find a shared physical and emotional vocabulary. Yet, a curious thing happened during the second half of each rehearsal. Actors would often find moments of inspiration, as pieces of physical, emotional, or symbolic correspondence would crop up in the first read through of the second scene. When examined in isolation, the two scenes often featured a reversal of the situational power dynamics—a character who was dominant in the first half would be subservient in the second, and vice-versa. The frequency with which this occurred was proof positive of the benefits of working in a highly unusual pattern, which served to strengthen the chiasmic structure. This allowed for both a more nuanced understanding of the scene's power structure as well as a means by which blocking patterns and stage pictures could be replicated or inverted. For instance, Torvald's stern lecture to Nora in scene five was later blocked in the exact reverse order to form the basis of Nora's tarantella dance in scene eleven. The creation of these recurrent moments of balance and inversion lent a game-like quality to the rest of the blocking rehearsals, which would be further explored in the staging process.

One unexpected benefit of the scenic design in the Mabey Theatre revealed itself during this phase of rehearsals, which greatly assisted in developing *Nora's* unique visual look. In addition to having actors seated in the "no spaces" near the peripheral edge of the stage, Torvald's chair was positioned downstage center close to the audience downstage center. When an actor sat in any of these positions, a layer of depth was immediately added to any stage picture. The actors and director discovered that when used judiciously,

the composition took on a cinematic quality, akin to an over the shoulder shot. This resulted in a style of theatrical staging that intentionally paid homage to Bergman's film work.



Fig. 4.2. An example of cinematic composition in production, employing depth of field provided by the thrust configuration of the Mabee Theatre.

Working with Emmy

Once each scene of the show had been blocked, the next major goal was an initial run-through of the production. The rehearsal served as the first opportunity for the director to see how the pieces of the show fit together. This diagnostic aspect of the rehearsal would be helpful in ascertaining the state of the production and would be important in determining the direction of the next phase of rehearsals. Additionally, this run-through provided a chance for the actress playing Emmy to watch the work the other actors had done in her absence.

The run-through itself was frustrating for everyone involved—the energy was uneven, the blocking felt unnatural, and lines proved elusive. With the production running just over two hours, there was neither the time, nor the interest on my part to make the cast run the show again that evening. Additionally, a morale boost seemed necessary, since the cast’s confidence with lines was shaky (particularly the actress playing Nora) and the overall energy of the evening was low. With the entire cast at rehearsal once again, the opportunity to utilize more advanced Viewpoints-work presented itself. Since the actors had trouble maintaining a sense of consistency, the goal of the activity was for the actors to reconnect to the larger story arcs while rebuilding the sense of ensemble that was missing from *Nora*.

Sensing the cast needed time to collaborate without the presence of the director, I laid out the rules of the exercise before leaving the room. The group was tasked with telling the entire story of *Nora* within the duration of a piece of preselected music. The tools at their disposal were their own bodies, the rehearsal furniture and props that were in the room, and a five-minute long song entitled “November” by composer Max Richter. The blocking and the placement of furniture and props on the stage could be used or altered as needed. In order to directly incorporate Emmy into the story in a dynamic manner, she was established as the only character who was allowed to speak. After listening to the song once, the group was given 30 minutes to create and rehearse their devised scene.

A director walking out of the rehearsal room is often a transgressive act, but in this instance, it was necessary in service of collaboration. The run-through earlier in the evening demonstrated the actors had little connection to neither the main action of the

show or its emotional content. My directorial approach revealed itself to be too controlling, and the show I had envisioned was largely absent onstage. Allowing the cast to take creative control was a show of faith that their input was encouraged as we moved in the next phase of rehearsals.

The devised piece that resulted from this exercise was a beautiful demonstration of how much the ensemble spirit had grown since our explorations on the night of the first read-through. Following the presentation, the discussion became spirited and lively, as the cast explained the process of creation during the time I had been out of the theatre. The tone of the conversation was supportive and encouraging, with very little individual credit being taken. On such a positive note, the rehearsal ended a few minutes early. As the cast left the rehearsal room, there was a renewed sense of energy and purpose that had not been felt since the first rehearsal. The most positive note came from my stage manager who mentioned how the actress playing Nora had become the *de facto* leader of the exercise on account of her previous experience with devised ensemble work. Without protestation, the rest of the cast boldly followed her lead, freed from the mounting frustrations which had occurred earlier in the night when the actors had struggled with memorization.

Emboldened by this successful collaboration, I felt confident enough to spend the next two rehearsals actively working Emmy into the production. As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, the addition of Emmy was unique to this production of *Nora*. Emmy's perspective was the guiding principle for the design choices and would be an important tool in providing an appropriate framework for staging the production itself.

The next night, the rehearsal was spent with the actress playing Emmy leading a run-through of the show. This rehearsal functioned like an unstructured play environment, used in experiments by developmental psychologists. Through the process of imitating and recreating the world she had been shown the night before, the actress playing Emmy was able to refashion it as she saw fit. In this environment, Emmy was able to test and challenge the societal roles, customs, ideas, and forms of the world that had been created in her absence.

In an effort to give Emmy an authentic voice in the play, we worked quickly and thoroughly through each act finding words and actions which would help her communicate with the characters in a dialogic way. Under the guidance of the director, the actress playing Emmy identified lines of significance that could be either be said with other characters, repeated as an echo, or that she could say by herself. The way in which Emmy used her new dialogue to interact with characters was strong, forceful, and even antagonistic at times. This version of Emmy was far more radical than originally envisioned and discussed in early conversations with the actors.

After the second evening of these Emmy-centric rehearsals, the actress playing Nora informed me that she was concerned by her perception that she was now the villain of the show. The development of a role like Nora takes time, effort, and an abundance of energy. Bergman's cutting of Ibsen's script only enhanced the amount of mental, vocal, and physical energy the actress playing Nora needed. Her process had largely been developed through collaborative discussion in rehearsal, in order to gently merge aspects of herself with the character. From her perspective, all of her early work was undone now that she was being asked to play the character under such focused scrutiny from Emmy.

Realizing her uncertainty, but worried about the lack of rehearsal time, I responded in an uncharacteristically non-collaborative way. I explained that after two weeks of delaying work with Emmy, a more active approach to finish blocking the production was needed. I gently dismissed her fear, telling the actress we could always polish the dynamic between Nora and Emmy at a later rehearsal, if needed.

Unfortunately, what I didn't realize was that my new interpretation violated the fundamental rule of my Strindbergian production concept. The character of the dreamer is designed to be a figure that "neither acquits nor condemns, but merely relates the story."¹⁰

This active approach to Emmy's presence had caught the actors off-guard. They had not considered the impact of her actions on their own performances and were all struggling to adjust. This crucial misstep resulted in an early version of the show that was not only tonally wrong, but which also undermined the production concept upon which every other decision had been based. This fact was made painfully obvious two nights later at the first designer run.

The Designer Run

Ideally, a designer run is an opportunity for the show to be seen by members of the production staff. Even in its rough state, the rehearsal allows the team to see and discuss any moments that might require adjustments to their designs, reveal the presence of quick changes, the need for lighting or sound cues during transitions, or the need for new props or scenic elements that had been overlooked. With many of *Nora's* questions surrounding the implementation of Emmy, the designers were anxious to see how our

¹⁰ Strindberg, *A Dream Play*, 33.

production was using her and what part the remaining design work necessary for a successful execution of the production.

Each of the designers was present at the run-through, along with my directing mentor, another directing professor, and my graduate cohort. From the moment the run began, it was evident that this would be a disastrous performance of the show. The actors struggled with lines in every scene and energy waned. The running time was still over two hours, well past the 95-minute mark that was our goal. However, the real problem was the aggressive new tone of the show. Even more problematic was the fact that Emmy's control over the world, and her treatment of Nora, was seen by the small audience as aggressive, hostile, and judgmental.

To further complicate matters, the prologue and epilogue that had been devised for the production were muddled and unclear, and the two key transitions the designers needed to see were skipped over, as they had not yet been blocked. One of the designers dozed off about 45 minutes into the proceedings. At the end of the run, it was clear that the designers were more confused than enthused about the production. They put on their best smiles and gave words of encouragement as they shuffled out, promising me it would come together. When I spoke to the cast afterward, morale was low. After a brief pep talk, I released the actors early in order to spend the rest of the evening in discussion with my directing mentor on how to correct my directorial oversight.

My mentor was supportive and had very clear notes that let me know he saw potential in the show. He applauded the cinematic composition of many of the scenes before suggesting ways to solve the major problems he saw, which all centered around Emmy. Her oppressive presence was off-putting for him as an audience member and he

felt that the staging was contrived and manipulative. He encouraged me to simplify the use of Emmy over the next few rehearsals with the note: “There’s something to Torvald’s line when he tells Nora to ‘stop pretending.’ See what happens if that is the first time Emmy turns around.” He suggested that I prepare a second designer run at the end of the week in order to show him and the designers the new and improved approach.

Negotiating “The Slump”

The disappointment of the designer run had an unfortunate impact on morale. This phase of rehearsal, which I call “the slump,” was further compounded by several other events. First, our rehearsal time was foreshortened by a university mandated fall break, reducing the amount of time to restage the necessary elements before the second designer run. Second, the actors had been spooked by the first designer run and were trying to pin blame on one another, undermining the entire ensemble mindset that had been so carefully cultivated. My stage manager informed me that a cast member had complained that too much rehearsal time had been spent “talking about Nora.” And third, a chronic directorial habit set in—wherein I abandon my normal positivist mindset in favor of a period of harsh self-critique and creative paralysis.

During my time at Baylor, I have worked on developing coping strategies in order to coax myself out of “the slump” before this emotional state infiltrates the rehearsal room. In rereading Ingmar Bergman’s notes on directing, I found an empowering passage: “If you are afraid and insecure, then you must not say you’re afraid and insecure and you adopt the opposite attitude...you become decisive, you insist, become ruthless.”¹¹ In my attempts to be an open collaborative director, I had avoided a degree of

¹¹ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 42-43.

decisiveness that is necessary in an efficient director. That afternoon, I spent a few hours reading the script and preparing a focused and detailed plan with several potential solutions to fixing the Emmy dilemma. Taking my mentor's advice, I was able to create short outlines for the prologue, epilogue, and two major transitions that would feature Emmy, while discarding the rest of the lines that had been assigned to her. As my mentor suggested, Torvald's "stop pretending" line became the lynchpin for justifying Emmy's participation in the final sequence of the production.

At rehearsal that evening, I briefly mentioned to the cast that the brunt of the blame for the designer run lay with many of the choices I had made which contradicted our production concept. With the entire cast present, we collectively created a new prologue and epilogue, and restaged four major transitions.



Fig. 4.3. Final polishing rehearsal with Torvald and Nora.

The prologue featured Emmy pulling out dolls that resembled Torvald, Dr. Rank, Mrs. Linde, and Krogstad from a drawer in her room, while these characters walked onstage into the “no spaces” to begin the production. After Nora’s entrance, Emmy crept down into the living room to peek through her mother’s shopping bags. Nora caught Emmy red-handed, but in a moment of motherly love, handed over the doll along with a couple of macaroons. With her doll collection complete, Emmy spoke the first few lines of Ibsen’s original text while playing with her Nora and Torvald dolls before the characters themselves began with Bergman’s script. The macaroons and dolls found their way into the transition between scenes five and six as Emmy reenacted a playful interaction between Nora, Mrs. Linde, and Dr. Rank from earlier in the action. Emmy later fancifully imagined her father coming to her mother’s aid after Krogstad put his letter in the mailbox, juxtaposed against a silent Nora desperately struggling to maintain a sense of calm while completely alone onstage. During the Helmers’ final fight, when Torvald yelled at Nora to “stop pretending,” both mother and daughter reacted. Shortly thereafter, when Nora and Torvald’s intimate moment on the couch, Emmy thrust her dolls together over and over, unsure and uncomfortable with the action—but in hopes of solving the growing enmity between her mother and father. Through these short examples of symbolic play, Emmy’s understanding of the events transpiring downstairs in her home was shown to be indirect and incomplete.

The new staging plans for implementing Emmy were met with a general sense of relief and enthusiastic support by the cast. With these simple additions, the tonal shift of the show was immediate. The actress playing Nora no longer felt like the villain. The actor who had complained about long discussions was promised more run-throughs. And

the actress playing Emmy was freed from a rigid, unyielding concept I had created *for* her, rather than *with* her. This realization allowed the actress to openly collaborate with me for the first time in the process. By allowing Emmy to be an actual six-year-old rather than the bitter puppet master I had morphed her into, her presence became an integral part of the show. And by giving the actors some basic material to work with, their creative energies were engaged—and true collaboration could occur.

Two nights later, at the second designer run, my mentor remarked that the show was like night and day. The production manager commented on how she had not seen that marked of a difference in any show during her time at Baylor. And the other designers saw the elements they needed to see and left this time smiling and saying, “It all came together.”

The emotional complexity and line demands of the character of Nora led a fellow graduate student to refer to the role as a female Hamlet. The actresses playing Nora had arranged to receive her script two weeks before rehearsals began in order to begin memorization. However, as the production headed into the extended fall break prior our final week of working rehearsals, my directing mentor expressed some concern that the actress was continuing to struggle with lines, long after our deadline for being off-book. It was recommended that she use the break to study lines and watch some episodes of *The Donna Reed Show*, in order to revisit some of the style requirements of our production.

I compiled my list of notes and sent the actress an email with my requests. I anticipated we would tackle these issues together in our final week before tech. Unfortunately, my message was misinterpreted by the actress as a litany of reasons that I was disappointed in her, which sent Nora into a mini-slump of her own. Luckily I was

able to assure the actress that the solutions were to be found in a collaborative approach once we were back in the rehearsal room.

Finding the Ensemble Spirit

Returning from the fall break, I felt ready to regain the ground that the production had lost the week before. Having spent a great deal of early rehearsals dedicated to blocking, and much of the previous week restaging Emmy, the only three chances the cast had to perform the show in its entirety had been the early run-through without Emmy and the two designer runs. In the final week of rehearsals for *Nora*, I learned the value and necessity of run-throughs, especially in regards to younger actors.

With the show now running closer to 100 minutes, each rehearsal consisted of two runs with time for notes afterward. The process of crafting the complex character arcs asked for in this play required constant repetition. During this process, objectives became clearer, blocking was cleaned up, new business and behavior were added to create visual interest, and revisit the chiastic connections between scenes.

This increased frequency of run-throughs also assisted the actress playing Nora with her lines. However, the major problem the actress encountered during this final week was a lack of consistency. The staging was solid, her characterization was clear, but her energy and confidence varied wildly from night to night. This kind of inconsistency is particularly worrisome to a director as the one thing we cannot control is an actor's emotional stamina and physical energy during a performance.

In an attempt to motivate the actress, I checked with her every night and provided a healthy amount of positive encouragement. Remembering how she responded to my



Fig. 4.4. The exchanging of the rings in rehearsal.



Fig. 4.5. The exchanging of the rings in performance.

notes the weekend before, I felt that any additional pressure or critique would do unnecessary damage. Each night showed improvement, but it often took two bad runs to achieve to one good run, a luxury we would not have in performance. However, the final run-through before technical rehearsals was nearly perfect—the passion, the energy, the pacing, the characterization, and line memorization all coalesced into a performance in which the actors finally found a way to share the demands of the production. From this moment on, the cast worked flawlessly as an ensemble. As the show moved into technical rehearsals and performance, dropped lines and missed cues were no longer seen as a point of frustration but instead offered an opportunity for the actors to support one another.

The ultimate test of the production's collaborative ensemble came during the second night of performance. Despite a rigorous pre-show check, the show's assistant stage manager failed to place a box onstage which contained several crucial props—including Nora's tarantella vest and her tambourine. The error was not realized until shortly before the box was to be used by Nora and Mrs. Linde. The staging of the show did not have any character exits or blackouts during which the box could be retrieved, forcing Nora and Mrs. Linde to largely adlib the dialogue of the scene. As the production continued, the stage manager instantly devised a way to cover the mistake. She instructed the assistant stage manager to quietly sneak up the stage left vomitorium, just beneath Emmy's platform. The box was discretely handed to Emmy, who was then able to disperse the items to her fellow actors.

The forethought, composure, and skill required of all of the participants in this sequence of events are commendable, especially since none of the audience members

knew a mistake was made. The fact that this happened without discussion or pre-planning was truly a testament to the strength of the ensemble that had been created during our rehearsal process. For all of the successes of the cast and crew during the rehearsals and performances of *Nora*, that one failure may have served as our biggest collaborative achievement.



Fig. 4.6. Preliminary technical rehearsal with lighting.

Conclusion

In rehearsals for *Nora*, the collaborative nature of the director-actor relationship proved to be far more mercurial than the director-designer relationship. The demands of Bergman's script, and the challenge of combining realistic and non-realistic acting styles, required a unique combination of skills not often asked of Baylor students. While an enthusiastic personality and unflinching faith in a production are valuable tools in the

director's repertoire, it is the ability to collaborate with actors that ultimately determines the outcome of the production. The strong, unified style of *Nora* was forged during the hours spent in the rehearsal room, and it was not a perfect process. However, even in moments of doubt, confusion, and frustration, the cast and director were able to maintain a positive, supportive, and collaborative spirit.

For Ingmar Bergman, the collaborative relationship between an actor and director was significant to the development of a performance. However, he argued that only three elements (a “magic triangle”) were “necessary for a theatrical production to function.”¹² The dynamic collaboration between the actors, the audience, and the conceptual idea applied to a text coalesced to produce the Bergmanian idea of theatre. With this in mind, the final chapter of this thesis will examine the critical response to the Baylor production of *Nora* and assess the process of the director in relation to Bergman's three necessary elements.

¹² Marker and Marker, *Life*, 3.

CHAPTER FIVE

Production Assessment

Introduction

Ingmar Bergman's *Nora* experienced a nearly sold-out run at Baylor University from November 17–22, 2015. Reaction from Baylor patrons and faculty was predominantly positive, with special recognition for the inclusion of Emmy as well as the professionalism of the design elements. This chapter will analyze the success and overall impact of Baylor's production of *Nora*, with emphasis on the director's work with the actors and designers, as well as the execution of the production concept. Where needed, reference will be made to the other mainstage performance I directed at Baylor—the 2014 summer qualifying production of *On the Verge*—in order to chart the growth of the effectiveness of my directorial leadership and artistic decision making.

The Actor-Director Collaboration

As a former actor, my directorial process has largely been based on approaching the craft thinking like an actor. This performer-centric mindset has incredible benefits for the actor-director relationship. At its best, this approach allows a director a deeper understanding of the actor's technique. A technical shorthand can be quickly developed between director and actor. When an actor feels that their process is being respected, they are willing to take chances and risks that otherwise remain locked behind a protective emotional barrier. And a director who “speaks actor” can assist a performer in determining *how* to achieve a character objective or bit of action as opposed to telling

them them *what* to do. However, if a director spends too much time doing the actor's job, the potential for conflict greatly increases.

My summer qualifying show, *On the Verge*, suffered from a disastrous combination of this habit and a compact rehearsal period. Thinking I was saving valuable time, I would often physically or vocally demonstrate precisely what I wanted from my actors. After enough time, my constant adjustments were interpreted by the actors as a devaluation of their talents, which served to shut down any sense of collaboration between the actors and myself. In speaking to this tendency, Bergman notes: "You must not infect the actors, because if you infect them with your tension, they will be very unhappy."¹ Instead of stepping back to look at the big picture, I tended to step in and micro-manage each moment. My intrusions, as good-natured and helpful as I believed they were, were coming from a place of anxiety and nervousness about the production and my directorial process. Bergman wrote of this phenomenon in an insightful way: "Acting is never an *I*, it is always a *you*."² I erroneously saw myself as the figure with all of the answers. My inability to put complete trust in my collaborators and their process created a self-fulfilling prophecy of further distrust and tension. Working on *Nora* forced me to face down this harmful habit and reconsider my own expectations of what I should do as a director.

As noted in Chapter Four, the actors seemed to flourish when I came into rehearsal with ideas and plans, but remained flexible enough to receive and incorporate their ideas. Bergman also speaks to this idea: "You must be absolutely certain when you

¹ Marker and Marker, *Life*, 18

² Ibid., 17.

go to rehearsals. When you go to the first rehearsal, you must be absolutely sure, you must have prepared precisely...and then you can relax into the material.”³ Given the importance of this production as my thesis, I initially prepared in a more detailed way than I have in the past. In this vein, the most successful evenings had clear goals—such as the well-planned first rehearsal set the appropriate tone and the first blocking rehearsals spent exploring the play’s chiastic structure. However, as the process wore on, I admittedly did not spend an adequate time each day mentally preparing for each evening’s rehearsals. By the time Emmy was ready to be integrated into the show, I had failed to create a clear plan of action, and thus, Emmy was incorporated into the show in an incongruous manner. Only after spending a great deal of time reexamining my approach to Emmy was I able to bring fruitful ideas into the rehearsal room. As detrimental as tension can be to actors, lethargy can be just as harmful.

The most successful aspect of the director-actor relationship during *Nora* was Viewpoints work, which created an ensemble spirit that expanded Bergman’s notion in a healthy way—“Acting is never an *I*, it is always a *we*.” This freedom to explore and create together led the actors to use words like “energetic, creative, positive, optimistic, organic, intuitive, welcoming, ensuring, and collaborative” to describe our rehearsal room. Successful directing toes a fine line—give the actors too many directions and they will rebel; give the actors too few and they could flounder; give them a responsibility to each other and they will rise to the occasion.

³ Ibid.

The Designer-Director Collaboration

While the actor-director relationship required constant monitoring, the designer-director relationship proved how well a group of people can be collaboratively creative with little effort. Outside of one designer's approach and a few small disagreements, the entire design process for *Nora* was highly productive and resulted in an incredibly cohesive aesthetic look and sound.

When the designs were presented for the entire department, students and faculty expressed excitement and overwhelming support for the show's concept. While all of the design elements garnered acclaim, the execution of the scenic design was overwhelmingly singled out as one of the finest examples of true artistry at Baylor Theatre. At each of the performances, I overheard at least one audience member whisper how they wanted to live in that house. This is a testament to the scenic designer's professional skills and attitude, but also speaks to the high level of respect and support found in our collaborative relationship. The designer noted that the strength of director-designer collaborations was rooted in my belief in the production concept.

Following my summer qualifying production of *On the Verge*, the Baylor faculty remarked how my direction of the play had lacked narrative clarity. This was largely seen in how the story elements were overwhelmed by technical elements. It stands as a mark of success that for *Nora*, through a highly collaborative working relationship with my directing mentor, I was able to hone in on a clear production concept that enhanced the storytelling, rather than seeking out moments in the story that supported more spectacle. That said, the expressionistic use of lighting and sound assisted in creating an undercurrent of danger and dissatisfaction in *Nora* that harkens back to Bergman's

description of Nora's feeling of being unfulfilled. As noted earlier, one patron remarked that *Nora* displayed the most nuanced and impactful use of sound and music since the 2010 thesis production of *The Seagull*, which had a score specifically written for it.

After praising the work of the design team, one faculty member, who was familiar with Bergman's production, wondered how the production would have fared with more minimalist scenic design. Reflecting upon the definition of the Strindbergian chamber play, I recognize that for all of the successes of the design, a bit more restraint and simplicity could have served *Nora* far better. The sheer size of the scenic design completely filled the entirety of the Mabey, which did not create the sense of entrapment or claustrophobia which permeates Bergman's script. Although the troughs provided some sense of separation, they simply were too close to generate any sort of recognizable impact as a threshold. Instead, the audience was not given enough context to register the shift between between the actor-spectator and character when they entered or exited a scene. When the door fell in the final scene, it was a jarring and moving theatrical moment. However, because the world was so spacious, her escape did not feel as inevitable as it might have in a more suffocating domestic environment.

The ruling design aesthetic was filtering the world through Emmy's eyes, and while the scenic designer and I initially discussed experimenting with scale, that idea was abandoned early on. Given the opportunity to revisit that element may have allowed for a simple solution to create a more oppressive setting while also supporting the connection to the size difference between furniture and figurine in Emmy's dollhouse. I also relied too heavily on this filter to compensate for the luxury of the Helmers' home. Ibsen's script indicates that the family has not yet come into the wealth they expect from

Torvald's new employment. While children tend to remember their childhood homes with a more positive mindset, there was neither a scenic or textual support for this notion, thus failing to address this common problem in stagings of *A Doll's House*.

The Production Concept

From the beginning, the addition of Emmy was a risky proposition. Even though Bergman had reintroduced the figure of the daughter in his 1989 production, the means by which he did so were not officially recorded. Not to mention Bergman only used Hilde as a bookend to the performance; Emmy was to serve a narrative function through the entire production.

In the original discussion with my mentor, I articulated a hope that by including Emmy in the production, the audience might be able to see two generations of women simultaneously empowered and imperiled in their own complex, contradictory ways. By the end of the show, Emmy's dreamworld might have been shattered, but she has also been witness to an act of radical self-revelation on the part of her mother. In this goal, the production hit the right balance. After seeing a performance, one local theatre critic wrote:

Having Emmy stand in the open doorway can be read two ways and both work: She may follow her mother in a new world where women have more agency, or she's looking for direction, caught between the future of a departed mother and a present where both parents were absent emotionally. It was the sort of ending that primes post-play discussion and I have a weakness for that sort of thing.⁴

Other praise for the concept included one theatre faculty member who remarked that *Nora* was the strongest and most cohesive thesis show he had seen during his time at Baylor. He went on to praise the cinematic treatment of the staging, while noting that

⁴ Written correspondence with patron, December 4, 2015.

perhaps the best choice of the production was the decision to move the play forward to 1959. In discussions with his students, the consensus was that era served as a perfect bridge between Ibsen's world and our own. Several Baylor students remarked how, as children of divorce, the presence of Emmy allowed them to experience a deeper emotional connection with *Nora*. When the doors fell in on the Helmers' home, these audience members saw it not as an impressive metatheatrical device but as a literalization of the collapsing family. Other patrons remarked that the show would have felt false without the figure of the daughter, especially on account of how frequently the children are mentioned in the text. Another graduate faculty member perhaps offered the most pertinent assessment of the show, noting that the Baylor version of *Nora* was more an adaptation of Ibsen's play that happened to be using Bergman's script.

The one note of criticism toward the concept which I received centered on the number of levels on which the show operated. It was suggested that each portion of the production concept—the time shift, Emmy as the dreamer, Nora's expressionistic breakdown—could have served as their own concept alone. By layering them one on top of the other, none of them were able to develop to their full potential. The delayed addition of Emmy to the blocking phase, and last reconfiguration of her place in the production, no doubt contributed to this misperception.

Conclusion

When *Nora* was chosen as my thesis show, I had no idea that I, like Bergman, would be playing director *and* adaptor. The experience has given me a confidence in my ability to tell a powerful story in a clear, clean manner while still allowing room for my individual style to shape the production. However, the successes of the 2015 production

of *Nora* are not simply mine, but belong to the myriad collaborators I was so fortunate to work with along the way. From Ingmar Bergman to my cast and design team, each contributed necessary elements that allowed for the full realization of the timeless power of Ibsen's 140-year-old story.

At the conclusion of each performance, conversations and debates about Nora's decision filled the Mabey and continued out into the lobby as the patrons exited. One patron noted that Bergman's rendition of the Ibsen's drama with its conciseness and clarity of characterization made for a most enjoyable evening. Another patron appreciated the compression of Bergman's script but noted the success of the director and actress in constructing a more satisfactory character arc for Nora than the text suggests. Through a clear production concept, aided by the bold visual and aural strokes of design, as enacted by actors who worked as six parts of a cohesive ensemble, *Nora* proved that the final scene—which Ibsen and Bergman both located as the play's heart—is still as potent and impactful as ever.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Selected Production Photographs



Fig. A.1. The Helmer family—Torvald, Emmy, and Nora. The similar costumes for Nora and Emmy created a link between the two without having to say a word.



Figure A.2. Emmy finds a prize in Nora's shopping bags. This tableau was a portion of the prologue created specifically for the Baylor production of *Nora*.



Fig. A.3. "Oh, what a marvelous feeling it is!"



Fig. A.4. “You’ve changed so much, Christine!” Two women who have lived two very different lives.



Fig. A.5. “Oh god, isn’t it a glorious thing to be alive and be happy?”



Fig. A.6. “I have an awful desire to say—kiss my ass!” Nora’s rebellious side comes out when Mrs. Linde and Dr. Rank are around.



Fig. A.7. Emmy at play with her dolls.



Fig. A.8. Emmy's dolls, designed to mimic the look of (from left) Torvald, Nora, Dr. Rank, Mrs. Linde, and Krogstad. The designer gave Torvald tiny pant cuffs and handstitched in the checkerboard patterns found on Nora's dress and Dr. Rank's vest.



Fig. A.9. Krogstad reveals to Nora he knows her secret.



Fig. A.10. “No, you mustn’t take your letter back.” Krogstad and Mrs. Linde have a long-awaited reckoning in the one scene of *Nora* that does not feature the titular character. Krogstad’s green suit is in homage to the green/hope association found in *A Dream Play*.



Fig. A.11. “Torvald had lots of champagne this evening.”



Fig. A.12. Torvald and Nora get (reluctantly) intimate on the couch. The exposure and vulnerability of acting this inappropriately in the living room heightened the sexual energy.



Fig. A.13. Nora prepares to leave. The deep saturated red lighting was foreshadowed earlier in the production as Nora slowly started to lose her grip on reality.



Figs. A.14., A.15., and A.16. Other examples of cinematic composition in production.



Fig. A.17. A *coup de théâtre* as Emmy punched in the doors of her dollhouse, the massive front doors of the Helmers' home fell inward.



Fig. A.18. Nora's exit. Through the collaboration between the actress and the various designers made this stunning composition.



Fig. A.19. The final moment of the show. Emmy stands in the threshold of the doorway, trapped between the actions of her mother and the inaction of her father.

APPENDIX B

Comparison Chart Between *A Doll's House* and *Nora*

This chart is designed as a scene-by-scene comparison between Rolf Fjelde's *A Doll's House* from 1965, Ingmar Bergman's adapted text of *Nora* from 1983, and the additional material created for the Baylor production of *Nora* in 2015.

The document outlines any additions or subtractions of material between these three “texts,” including characters, dialogue, action, or stage directions. The following pages are divided into three columns, in order to easily track changes between each version. If the same action or dialogue occurs in more than one version, the text will span across the appropriate columns.

Any added material will be indicated by *italicized text*.

Any deleted material will be indicated by **bold text**.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

ACT I

SCENE 1

SCENE 1

A doorbell, followed by the sound of a door unlocking. NORA enters, coming home from a shopping trip with an armload of packages; she is followed by a DELIVERY BOY with a freshly cut tree. The MAID takes the tree to hide.

From her drawer, EMMY pulls out dolls that resemble Torvald, Dr. Rank, Mrs. Linde, and Krogstad. As she places each doll on the floor, these characters enter and sit. NORA enters with shopping bags and sets them by the Christmas tree. EMMY enters the living room and finds a doll before being caught by NORA.

NORA allows EMMY to take the doll, along with a handful of macaroons.

EMMY plays with her Nora and Torvald dolls, incorporating two lines from Ibsen's original text:

TORVALD: "Is that my little squirrel bustling about out there?"

NORA: "Yes, Torvald."

NORA's entrance has been cut entirely, along with the DELIVERY BOY and MAID.

NORA calls TORVALD to come see her purchases. TORVALD enters and admonishes his wife for spending so much before his new salary takes effect. We learn TORVALD, formerly a civil servant, has been made manager at the Cooperative Bank.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

TORVALD gives NORA a hard time about her sweet tooth and spendthrift nature, both of which she inherited from her father.

NORA reminds TORVALD to invite DR. RANK to dinner before discussing how wonderfully happy they both are.

TORVALD is reminded of the Christmas previous, when NORA was working on “ornaments for the tree.”

A bell rings in the hall and the MAID announces the arrival of a FEMALE GUEST for NORA and DR. RANK for TORVALD.

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

Discussion about the childrens’ gifts is cut, along with the mention of NORA’s father.

There are no macaroons in sight.

NORA and TORVALD share a kiss as the scene ends.

SCENE 2

NORA (*Murphy*)

EMMY makes her dolls kiss in unison with her parents. During this scene, she has decorated her dollhouse for Christmas.

SCENE 2

MRS. LINDE enters. NORA does not recognize her old friend at first, but becomes overly excited when she does. The two women catch up. NORA has lived a charmed life, while MRS. LINDE has lived a life full of loss. NORA brags to MRS. LINDE about TORVALD’s new position at the bank. She then tells of her father’s death and TORVALD’s illness from eight years prior.

MRS. LINDE’s brief mention of DR. RANK is cut, as is a minor argument between the women about pride.

NORA admits her father didn’t co-sign the loan for the trip to Italy. MRS. LINDE presses NORA about how she borrowed the money.

NORA’s recounting of her childish ways to convince TORVALD to travel are cut.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

NORA confesses she has taken odd jobs and housekeeping duties to earn extra money to pay back the interest on the loan. To lighten the mood, NORA teases MRS. LINDE by telling her increasingly silly stories about how she got the money—most notably, that she has a “rich admirer” who lavishes her with gifts and money.

A bell is heard. A
SERVANT announces a
gentleman visitor.

There is no bell heard or SERVANT.

SCENE 3

SCENE 3

KROGSTAD enters. MRS. LINDE avoids being seen by him. NORA is unnerved by the man’s presence before he marches into TORVALD’s office. NORA notices MRS. LINDE seems to have recognized him, but dismisses her friend’s questions about the man.

*EMMY considers the
Krogstad doll, then
puts it away.*

DR. RANK comes out of
TORVALD’s study.

**TORVALD is not in his study. DR. RANK just
emerges.**

DR. RANK enters. NORA introduces him to MRS. LINDE. RANK tells the women about KROGSTAD, who has been hired as a clerk at the bank and is now an employee of TORVALD. NORA laughs wildly and scarfs down some macaroons. She tells MRS. LINDE and DR. RANK she wants to say something shocking.

*Hearing NORA talk
about macaroons,
EMMY eats one.*

NORA says “Well, I’m
damned.

*NORA jumps on the couch and says “Kiss my
ass!”*

TORVALD enters. NORA introduces MRS. LINDE to her husband and coerces TORVALD into giving her a job. TORVALD agrees and prepares to leave.

*EMMY makes a cape
for her Torvald doll
and makes him fly
around the room.*

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

The CHILDREN are heard on the stairs. They run in, followed by the NURSE as TORVALD, DR. RANK, and MRS. LINDE prepare to leave. NORA excited plays with the children. They all start a game of hide and seek.

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

There is no NURSE and no children run into the living room.

SCENE 4

NORA (*Murphy*)

SCENE 4

KROGSTAD enters the living room alone, unbeknownst to NORA. She is startled.

NORA sends the children after the NURSE.
KROGSTAD asks about MRS. LINDE.

EMMY hides in the corner of her room upon hearing KROGSTAD's voice.

KROGSTAD begs NORA to convince TORVALD to keep him at the bank. When NORA refuses, KROGSTAD taunts her. She threatens to make him leave. He reminds her that he lent her the money to travel to Italy and suggests that he might expose her secret to TORVALD. KROGSTAD recounts the terms of their deal, most notably the clause that NORA's father signed as co-guarantor. As KROGSTAD presses her, NORA finally admits that she forged her father's signature on the loan.

As NORA and KROGSTAD talk about money, EMMY cuts up green construction paper into dollar bills.

KROGSTAD encourages NORA to speak to TORVALD before he does. Then KROGSTAD leaves.

The CHILDREN run back in once the "stranger man" leaves.

There are still no children running into the living room.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

SCENE 5

SCENE 5

The MAID enters with the Christmas tree and NORA begins dressing it.

The Christmas tree is already up and decorated.

TORVALD enters, asking if anyone had been in the house. NORA lies, and TORVALD catches her. He assumes KROGSTAD has asked NORA to plead his case. TORVALD dismisses the conversation and begins looking over bank documents. NORA tries to catch his attention by asking about KROGSTAD's past indiscretion. TORVALD tells how KROGSTAD forged a signature on a loan, and never paid it back nor took his punishment. TORVALD rails against that kind of duplicitousness, especially around children.

TORVALD claims it's the bad influence of the mother that causes the problem.

TORVALD makes NORA promise not to bring up KROGSTAD again. He exits.

The NURSE enters, informing NORA the children would like to see her. NORA denies their request, worried that her misdeeds might poison them.

EMMY makes a crown for herself and for her Nora doll and makes a "Emmy's Castle" sign to put on the dollhouse.

END OF ACT I

A short pause in the action—the setting shifts to the dining room.

Scene transition—the five characters change costumes to indicate a passage of time. EMMY reenacts the macaroon sequence from scene 3 with her Nora, Linde and Dr. Rank dolls.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

ACT II

SCENE 6

SCENE 6

The next day. NORA is pacing around the living room, distraught. The NURSE enters with a box containing NORA's tarantella costume, which needs mending. NORA asks the NURSE to fetch MRS. LINDE. Before the NURSE leaves, NORA asks about the children, whom she has been avoiding. The NURSE tells NORA to reconsider, as she gave up a relationship with her own children in order to be a nurse to a young NORA after the death of her mother.

The NURSE does not appear and the dialogue regarding NORA's mother is cut.

At the end of the scene transition, NORA pulls a present from under the tree, which contains the tarantella costume.

MRS. LINDE assists in mending the costume, while discretely getting information from NORA about DR. RANK, who she believes is NORA's "rich old admirer." NORA deflects MRS. LINDE's questions by telling her that DR. RANK is seriously ill.

RANK is said to have "consumption of the spine."

RANK's illness is not specified, but it is implied that he contracted syphilis from his father's extramarital affairs.

Still not convinced, MRS. LINDE warns NORA about the impropriety of that type of relationship, but NORA laughs off her advice. However, this conversation unintentionally backfires, as MRS. LINDE's suspicions serve to plant the previously unconsidered idea of NORA asking DR. RANK for money. NORA asks detailed question about the conditions of loans, which piques MRS. LINDE's curiosity. NORA hurries her out as the sounds of TORVALD coming home are heard.

EMMY draws a picture of her parents with a heart in the middle.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

SCENE 7

SCENE 7

TORVALD returns home from the bank. Before he can make it to his study, NORA distracts him in order to ask about KROGSTAD.

NORA is very flirtatious and using the pet names
TORVALD usually calls her.

NORA is far more reserved here. Bergman hated all of the pet names, so they are omitted.

TORVALD sees through NORA's ruse and reprimands his wife for taking up KROGSTAD's cause. The problem is KROGSTAD runs deeper than his forgery. TORVALD reveals that he and KROGSTAD were previously classmates in law school, and that familiarity is now embarrassing given the difference in their social positions. When NORA continues to protest, TORVALD signs a letter of dismissal.

TORVALD summons the MAID and instructs her to deliver the letter to KROGSTAD.

There is no MAID, so the letter isn't visibly delivered. The question of how KROGSTAD received the letter and ascertained its contents two scenes later is chalked up to the dreamplay aspect of the text.

NORA is visibly upset at TORVALD's callousness. However, he consoles his wife, promising her that "when the time comes," he will have courage and strength to bear whatever it is that is causing NORA so much fear. TORVALD attempts to distract his wife by encouraging her to practice her tarantella dance with the tambourine. He retreats to his office, shutting the inner door so he "shall hear nothing."

During the discussion of the "wonderful thing," EMMY draws constructs a paper butterfly to play with her dolls.

In the transition, NORA taps her tambourine before throwing it at TORVALD's chair.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

The sound of a bell. NORA composes herself and opens the door to DR. RANK.

SCENE 8

There is no bell heard. RANK just appears.

SCENE 8

DR. RANK enters, despondent. He tells NORA that he has checked his accounts and is bankrupt.

RANK explicitly suggests that with a month, he “shall lie rotting in the churchyard.” He notes that when he becomes mortally ill, he will send a card with a black cross on it. He and NORA start playful banter that is full of innuendo.

No overt mention is made of RANK’s impending death. The card with the black cross is omitted. The flirtatious back and forth is greatly diminished—the prevailing Strindbergian mood of the scene is death, rather than eroticism.

After DR. RANK’s arrival, EMMY takes up her Nora and Rank dolls and cuts out red construction paper hearts.

DR. RANK believes NORA will get over his death soon enough on account of the presence of MRS. LINDE. NORA assuages his fear and distracts him by pulling out the “flesh-colored” stockings she will wear as part of her tarantella outfit. RANK is aroused and becomes very flirtatious. NORA and RANK both misread the situation—NORA prepares to ask RANK for money; RANK prepares to profess his secret love for NORA. RANK speaks first, which elicits a negative reaction from NORA. RANK attempts to regain her favor, but NORA dismisses him. She makes RANK promise that TORVALD will never hear of what happened before he leaves.

NORA compares her relationship with RANK to the one she shares with the servants—entertaining, but not serious. The MAID arrives and hands NORA a card. She reacts, but does not tell RANK why. RANK exits. The MAID goes to fetch KROGSTAD.

The last portion of the scene with RANK is cut. No MAID appears.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

SCENE 9

KROGSTAD enters, visibly angry. He tells NORA that has has received his dismissal. NORA feigns innocence, but KROGSTAD sees through her ruse. As his temper subsides, he offers NORA a deal—if TORVALD creates a position for KROGSTAD at the bank, the loan debt will be considered paid. NORA refuses. KROGSTAD torments NORA by implying that even if she were to leave or commit suicide, he would still expose her as a fraud. KROGSTAD drops a letter explaining the situation to TORVALD into the locked mailbox. NORA lets out a cry.

*During this scene,
EMMY takes her dolls
on an adventure.
Hearing NORA's
reaction when
KROGSTAD deposits
the letter, EMMY
realizes that her mother
is in trouble.*

*EMMY is given NORA's
line: "Oh Torvald, now
we're all out of hope."*

*She consoles her Nora
doll with her Torvald
doll.*

SCENE 10

MRS. LINDE enters with the mended dress. She recognizes NORA is upset. NORA confesses everything to MRS. LINDE about borrowing the money from KROGSTAD. NORA unsuccessfully tries to open the mailbox with a hairpin. Given her history with KROGSTAD, MRS. LINDE offers to convince him to demand his letter back on NORA's behalf

TORVALD overhears the
commotion and tries to enter
the locked door.

TORVALD does not try to enter.

SCENE 10

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

MRS. LINDE exits to find KROGSTAD as TORVALD and DR. RANK enter.

SCENE 11

SCENE 11

The men are surprised to see NORA upset, having been expecting her to be dressed in her tarantella costume. NORA makes TORVALD promise to give his entire attention to her for the evening. TORVALD promises.

TORVALD goes to the mailbox. To distract him, NORA plays on the piano. TORVALD moves to the piano to play for her.

TORVALD does not mention the mailbox. No one plays the piano.

NORA pulls TORVALD away from the mailbox and sits him in his chair. She then puts a record on the turntable and positions RANK to turn it on when she is ready.

NORA dances the tarantella under the watchful eye of TORVALD and DR. RANK.

RANK takes over at the piano for TORVALD as he instructs NORA. MRS. LINDE reappears.

NORA's dance is short and low-energy. MRS. LINDE does not reappear.

TORVALD coaches NORA, who wriggles out of his grasp. NORA turns up the RPM on the record player, making her dance more wild and frenzied. MRS. LINDE does not reappear.

TORVALD demands NORA stop dancing. He remarks she needs instruction and NORA makes his promise again to focus his attention on her for the evening.

TORVALD realizes there is a letter in the mailbox. RANK supports NORA and TORVALD promises not to check the box until the next evening. The MAID enters to summon the Helmers to dinner. NORA is left alone onstage, shaken.

A short pause in the action—the setting remains the same.

EMMY watches her mom dance before making Rover, her toy dog, dance with her.

NORA and TORVALD kiss as EMMY mimics with her dolls.

END OF ACT II

INTERMISSION

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

EMMY sprinkles small pieces of white paper to make it snow on the dollhouse. Snow falls outside the Helmers' home as well.

ACT III

SCENE 12

SCENE 12

Music from the Stenborgs' party upstairs can be heard. MRS. LINDE sits at the table in anticipation. KROGSTAD is heard on the stairs, and MRS. LINDE leads him into the Helmers' home.

Introductory dialogue is cut, as KROGSTAD and MRS. LINDE begin in the Helmers' house.

MRS. LINDE wants to talk, but KROGSTAD dismisses her. She apologizes for breaking his heart. She also mentions she just learned it was his place she took at the bank.

KROGSTAD is very angry and defensive and it takes MRS. LINDE a great deal of time to win him over.

KROGSTAD has been softened and is more easily won over.

MRS. LINDE insinuates the two of them could have a relationship once again and KROGSTAD responds positively.

The sounds of the tarantella are heard—indicating KROGSTAD should leave.

No music is heard.

KROGSTAD mentions the letter, of which MRS. LINDE is already aware. KROGSTAD becomes suspicious of her motives. She denies wanting to help NORA, even going so far as to tell KROGSTAD to leave his letter in the box. She believes the truth must come out.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

The dance ends.

The couple share one last moment together before the Helmers arrive back home.
KROGSTAD exits.

When KROGSTAD finally leaves, EMMY places her Krogstad doll back in the drawer.

SCENE 13

SCENE 13

TORVALD drags NORA in, protesting.

No protestations are heard. *NORA and TORVALD simply appear.*

NORA and TORVALD are caught by surprise at MRS. LINDE's presence. She covers by saying she wanted to see NORA in her costume. TORVALD drunkenly shows off his wife, while retelling the events of the evening. He gets overheated and exits to change. MRS. LINDE tells NORA her attempt to dissuade KROGSTAD has been unsuccessful and that she should tell her husband before he reads the letter. NORA dismisses her. TORVALD reenters with more champagne. MRS. LINDE prepares to leave. TORVALD finds her knitting and encourages her to take up embroidery. MRS. LINDE collects her things and exits. TORVALD turns his attentions to NORA and attempts to seduce her. NORA hesitates.

As TORVALD redoubles his efforts, a knock is heard. It is DR. RANK

There is no knock. *RANK appears.*

TORVALD invites RANK in, begrudgingly. The trio talks briefly of the party upstairs. NORA and DR. RANK speak in code about his health. It is not good. NORA changes the subject to imagining their costumes for the next ball. TORVALD dismisses her, but RANK plays along. He then asks TORVALD for a cigar and prepares to go. NORA lights the match for him. DR. RANK exits, placing two cards in the mailbox.

EMMY places her Dr. Rank doll in her drawer and covers him from one of the hearts she cut out for him in Scene 8.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

SCENE 14

SCENE 14

TORVALD goes to check the mailbox, despite NORA's protestations. He finds a broken hairpin in the lock, which NORA blames on the children. TORVALD manages to get it open and rifles through the accumulated mail.

Two cards from DR. RANK are found on top of the mail. NORA recognizes the black cross and tells TORVALD how sick DR. RANK is. TORVALD forgets about the rest of the mail when seeing how upset NORA is. TORVALD goes into the bedroom. NORA grabs TORVALD's coat and prepares to leave. TORVALD rushes back in, having read KROGSTAD's letter.

RANK does not drop any cards and TORVALD is not made aware of his friend's sickness. TORVALD remains onstage and reads the letter.

TORVALD demands an explanation of NORA. She attempts to explain, but his anger gets the best of him. TORVALD castigates NORA, calling her a liar and a hypocrite. He makes a plan to pay off KROGSTAD and demands NORA remain in the house, pretending as if nothing happened. However, he will not let her have any hand in raising the children.

The MAID enters with a letter from KROGSTAD.

There is no MAID. MRS. LINDE enters to hand TORVALD the letter from KROGSTAD, then exits.

When MRS. LINDE exits, EMMY then puts her Mrs. Linde doll away in the drawer with a heart on top of her.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

TORVALD reads the second letter and rejoices. He throws the letter and bon into the fire and immediately forgives NORA. He pays lip service to the reasons NORA mentioned earlier as to why she forged the note. NORA sees TORVALD for who he is.

NORA exits to change. TORVALD continues to talk about what a wonderful thing NORA did for him when he was sick. NORA reenters in traveling clothes.

TORVALD undresses NORA and they have sex.

A short pause in the action—the setting shifts to the Helmers' bedroom.

Emmy peeks into the living room and see her parents on the couch. Emmy copies them, pushing her Nora and Torvald dolls together to “fix” their relationship. It doesn't work.

Once TORVALD falls asleep, NORA grabs a package from under the tree and changes into a heavy winter coat. She reenters with a small overnight case.

EMMY places her dolls in the dollhouse and shines her lamp on them.

SCENE 15

SCENE 15

TORVALD is surprised by NORA's appearance. NORA demands an “accounting.” NORA explains to TORVALD how she has been treated like a doll first by her father, then by him. She throws TORVALD's major arguments from earlier back into his face. She tells him she is leaving him. TORVALD flies into a rage before demanding she stay. He tries everything he can to make her stay. NORA tells him that he didn't do the “wonderful thing” he had promised. He begs her to stay, but she demands they exchange rings and she returns her keys.

Comparison Chart (*Scene by Scene*) of the Three Versions

A DOLL HOUSE (*Fjelde*)

NORA (*Bergman/Marker*)

NORA (*Murphy*)

TORVALD asks if there is any hope of reconciliation. NORA tells him it would take a “wonderful thing”—that their life together would have to become a real marriage.

NORA exits down the stairs. The sound of a door shutting is heard from below.

END OF SHOW

END OF SHOW

EMMY moves to the stairs as NORA and TORVALD fight. NORA sees EMMY, realizing she has overheard the entire argument. NORA moves to comfort her daughter, but Emmy angrily retreats into her room. After a moment, she punches through the door of her dollhouse and knocks her lamp over.

The front doors of the Helmers' home fall inward. EMMY then rips up all of the pictures she has drawn and pictures and tears her room everything apart.

NORA walks out of the house as TORVALD cries on the couch. EMMY runs downstairs with her Nora and Torvald doll. She drops them as she approaches the door.

END OF SHOW

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