

teenth century is in many experiments—environmental a rich sense of the diversity to the theater” means going n, and watching the events ay by social and economic rlier audiences usually had nces are available today in throughout Europe, com rk’s Broadway, college and at Grahamstown in South e. Theater in the twentieth eater from among a rang ; the theaters we attend ar ways; and the performances tionalality in typically mod-

pean theaters were highly the phallus for comedy; a of France and Italy—in the uch more varied, not only oduction, but also as par on of the stage director is st esthetics more general emphasis on the artwork presence of an author esponsibility of organizi in classical Athenian the e later eighteenth centur ionalized: actors, like much rehearsal—an acve ss have an approach readie director has the respon ume, and lighting design e performance in a unaw on, so too in the theater r’s ability to shape the p expressive whole.

tor’s theater,” and in he innovations of brillian f Ibsen and Chekhov rom the standard practi ions from the page to islavski, Meyerhold, ; actors and directors Stanislavski, for exam psonse to the obli of atrical productions of with the director: Meyerhold’s brilliant ator’s work with Brod nis own and others

after World War II; Peter Brook’s use of the circus to realize the “magic” of Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in 1970; Robert Wilson’s visualization of Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmachine* in the 1980s. As a consequence, one of the most energetic kinds of experiment in the later part of the century has been in the area of a more collaborative theater practice. Like *Complicite*, many contemporary theater companies are organized as collectives, in which responsibility for the “artistic” decisions is shared, rather than given over to a single person. But even in more conventional circumstances, companies often work to make the playwright’s, actors’, and designers’ work have a more direct impact on the final stage of theater work. Caryl Churchill’s play *Cloud Nine*, for example, arose from a series of workshops undertaken by members of the Joint Stock Company, in which the actors experimented by playing different gender, sexual, or racial roles in a variety of situations; Churchill wrote the text of the play out of the workshops, and director Max Stafford-Clark used the results of the workshops as a foundation for the play’s theatrical performance. Given the increasing complexity of theatrical production—the use not only of complex technology backstage, but the inclusion of multimedia production as part of the performance itself—we can expect that this struggle to shape the authority of the stage will continue well into the future.

READING THE MATERIAL THEATER

Compared with the documentary record of earlier theaters, the modern theater offers an embarrassment of riches: not only is the print tradition rich in reviews, memoirs, and other accounts of the production and reception of plays in the theater, but also playwrights themselves have often left working drafts of their plays. Henrik Ibsen is particularly notable in this regard: an extremely disciplined and methodical writer, Ibsen not only began most of his plays with a detailed scenario; he retained many of the successive drafts

NOTES FOR THE MODERN TRAGEDY

Scene, 19, 10, 78.

There are two kinds of spiritual two kinds of conscience, one in man and another, altogether different, in woman. They do not understand each other; but in practical life the woman is judged by man’s law, as though she were not a woman but a man.

The wife in the play ends by feeling no idea of what is right or

of his plays. These materials provide a unique insight into the process of Ibsen’s imagination, and indeed into his practice as a writer as well.

What follows beginning at the bottom of this page are Ibsen’s “Notes for the Modern Tragedy,” dated 19 October 1878, and his original scenario for *A Doll House*. Not surprisingly, perhaps, many of the elements of the finished play remain in this outline. At the same time, this document differs from the final drama in a number of respects (including some of the characters’ names). Granted that a scenario necessarily tends to streamline the action and emphasize the plot of the play, do you find this

scenario surprising in any way? Does it seem to present the same kinds of moral or ethical emphases you find in the play? Are there elements of the finished play that seem larger or more powerful than you might have expected from this scenario alone? Are there elements of the scenario that are less prominent in the final draft? The final lines of the scenario are particularly chilling: “Five:—seven hours till midnight. Twenty-four hours till the next midnight. Twenty-four and seven—thirty-one. Thirty-one hours to live. . . .” How do these lines figure in Ibsen’s final imagining of the action of the finale of *A Doll House*?

wrong; natural feeling on the one hand and belief in authority on the other have altogether bewildered her.

A woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society, with laws framed by men and with a judicial system that judges feminine

conduct from a masculine point of view.

She has committed forgery, and she is proud of it; for she did it out of love for her husband, to save his life. But this husband with his commonplace principles of honour is on the side of the law and regards the question with masculine eyes.

READING THE MATERIAL THEATER (cont'd)

Spiritual conflicts. Oppressed and bewildered by the belief in authority, she loses faith in her moral right and ability to bring up her children. Bitterness. A mother in modern society, like certain insects who go away and die when she has done her duty in the propagation of the race.¹ Love of life, of home, of husband and children and family. Here and there a womanly shaking-off of her thoughts. Sudden return of anxiety and terror. She must bear it all alone. The catastrophe approaches, inexorably, inevitably. Despair, conflict and destruction.

(Krogstad has acted dishonourably and thereby become well-to-do; now his prosperity does not help him, he cannot recover his honour.)

PERSONS

STENBORG, a Government clerk.

NORA, his wife.

MISS (MRS.) LIND,
(a widow).

ATTORNEY KROGSTAD.

KAREN, nurse at the Stenborgs'.

A PARLOUR-MAID at the Stenborgs'.

A PORTER.

**THE STENBORGS' THREE
LITTLE CHILDREN**.

DOCTOR HANK.

SCENARIO

FIRST ACT

A room comfortably, but not showily, furnished. In the back, on the right, a door leads to the hall; on the

left another door leads to the room or office of the master of the house, which can be seen when the door is opened. A fire in the stove. Winter day.

She enters from the back, humming gaily; she is in outdoor dress and carries several parcels, has been shopping. As she opens the door, a Porter is seen in the hall, carrying a Christmas-tree. She: Put it down there for the present. (Taking out her purse) How much? Porter: Fifty öre. She: Here is a crown. No, keep the change. The Porter thanks her and goes. She continues humming and smiling with quiet glee as she opens several of the parcels she has brought. Calls off, is he at home? Yes! At first, conversation through the closed door; then he opens it and goes on talking to her while continuing to work most of the time, standing at his desk. There is a ring at the hall-door; he does not want to be disturbed; shuts himself in. The maid opens the door to her mistress's friend, just arrived in town. Happy surprise. Mutual explanation of the position of affairs. He has received the post of manager in the new joint-stock bank and is to enter on his duties at the New Year; all financial worries are at an end. The friend has come to town to look for some small employment in an office or whatever may present itself. Mrs. Stenborg gives her good hopes, is certain that all will turn out well. The maid opens the front-door to the debt collector. Mrs. Stenborg terrified; they exchange a few words; he is shown into the office. Mrs. Stenborg and her friend; the circumstances of the debt-collector are touched upon. Stenborg enters

in his overcoat; has sent the collector out the other way. Conversation about the friend's affairs, hesitation on his part. He and the friend go out; his wife follows them into the hall; the Nurse enters with the children. Mother and children plus The collector enters. Mrs. Stenborg sends the children out to the hall. Great scene between her and him. He goes. Stenborg enters; has him on the stairs; displeased; wants to know what he came back for. Her support? No intrigues. His wife cautiously tries to pump him. Strict legal answers. Exit to his room. (repeating her words when the collector went out) But that's impossible. Why, I did it from love!

SECOND ACT

The last day of the year. Midday. Nora and the old Nurse. Nora, impelled by uneasiness, is putting on her things to go out. Anxious random questions of one kind and another give a hint that thoughts of death are in her mind. Tries to banish these thoughts, to turn it off, hopes that something or other may intervene. But what? The Nurse goes off to the left.—Stenborg enters from his room. Short dialogue between him and Nora.—The Nurse re-enters, looking for Nora; the youngest child is crying. Annoyance and questioning on Stenborg's part; exit the Nurse; Stenborg is going in to the children.—Doctor Hank enters. Scene between him and Stenborg.—Nora soon re-enters; she has turned back; anxiety has driven her home again. Scene between her, the Doctor and Stenborg. Stenborg goes into his room.—Scene between Nora and the Doctor. The Doctor goes out.—Nora alone.—Mrs.

¹The sentence is elliptical in the original.

Linde enters. Scene between her and Nora.—Krogstad enters. Short scene between him, Mrs. Linde and Nora. Mrs. Linde goes in to the children.—Scene between Krogstad and Nora.—she entreats and implores him for the sake of her little children; in vain. Krogstad goes out. The letter is seen to fall from outside into the letterbox.—Mrs. Linde re-enters after a short pause. Scene between her and Nora. Half confession. Mrs. Linde goes out.—Nora alone.—Stenborg enters. Scene between him and Nora. He wants to empty the letter-box. Entreats, jests, half playful persuasion. He promises to let business wait till after New Year's Day; but at twelve o'clock midnight—! Exit. Nora alone. Nora (looking at the clock;) It is five o'clock. Five;—seven hours

till midnight. Twenty-four hours till the next midnight.

Twenty-four and seven—thirty-one. Thirty-one hours to live.—

THIRD ACT

A muffled sound of dance music is heard from the floor above. A lighted lamp on the table. Mrs. Linde sits in an armchair and absently turns the pages of a book, tries to read, but seems unable to fix her attention; once or twice she looks at her watch. Nora comes down from the dance; uneasiness has driven her; surprise at finding Mrs. Linde, who pretends that she wanted to see Nora in her costume. Helmer, displeased at her going away, comes to fetch her back. The Doctor also enters, but to say good-bye. Meanwhile Mrs. Linde has gone into the side room on the

right. Scene between the Doctor, Helmer and Nora. He is going to bed, he says, never to get up again; they are not to come and see him; there is ugliness about a death-bed. He goes out. Helmer goes upstairs again with Nora, after the latter has exchanged a few words of farewell with Mrs. Linde. Mrs. Linde alone. Then Krogstad. Scene and explanation between them. Both go out. Nora and the children. Then she alone. Then Helmer. He takes the letters out of the letter-box. Short scene; good-night; he goes into his room. Nora in despair prepares for the final step; is ready at the door when Helmer enters with the open letter in his hand. Great scene. A ring. Letter to Nora from Krogstad. Final scene. Divorce. Nora leaves the house. ■