

UPSTAGE

A GREAT PLACE TO READ ABOUT GREAT THEATRE • SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2018

**Belfry
Theatre**

VOLUME 5 / ISSUE 1

*Lucas Hnath's
stunning new drama,*

A Doll's House, Part 2,

*opens the Belfry's
new season.*



Hello!

Welcome to the Belfry and our production of *A Doll's House, Part 2*.

Before we go any further, let's dispel the notion that you have to have seen Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* before you see Lucas Hnath's *A Doll's House, Part 2*. Don't worry, each wonderful play stands on its own.

Michael Stewart's article (on the following page of Upstage) distills the original for you, and the librarians at the GVPL have put together suggestions for those of you who like to dig deeper into each play.

Our stellar cast includes Martha Burns, Benedict Campbell, Barbara Gordon and Alice Snaden - all of whom are making their Belfry debuts.

As always, we look forward to seeing you at the theatre.

UPSTAGE

is produced four times per year and can be found at branches of the Greater Victoria Public Library, the Belfry and online at issuu.com/belfrytheatre. If you would like a digital copy please drop us a line at hello@belfry.bc.ca.



B4Play

Gregor Craigie
Photo by Don Craig

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 AT 11 AM

Belfry Theatre, Studio A,
1291 Gladstone Avenue

Free Event. A live talk show hosted by CBC Radio's Gregor Craigie and featuring Falen Johnson (Playwright and Director) and Dakota Ray Hebert (Actor) from *Salt Baby*, along with experts from the community. B4Play is streamed live on Facebook.

Our podcast of B4Play is available at belfry.bc.ca/podcasts.

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BELFRY THEATRE

1291 GLADSTONE AVENUE

VICTORIA, BC

V8T 1G5

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A Doll's House, Part 2
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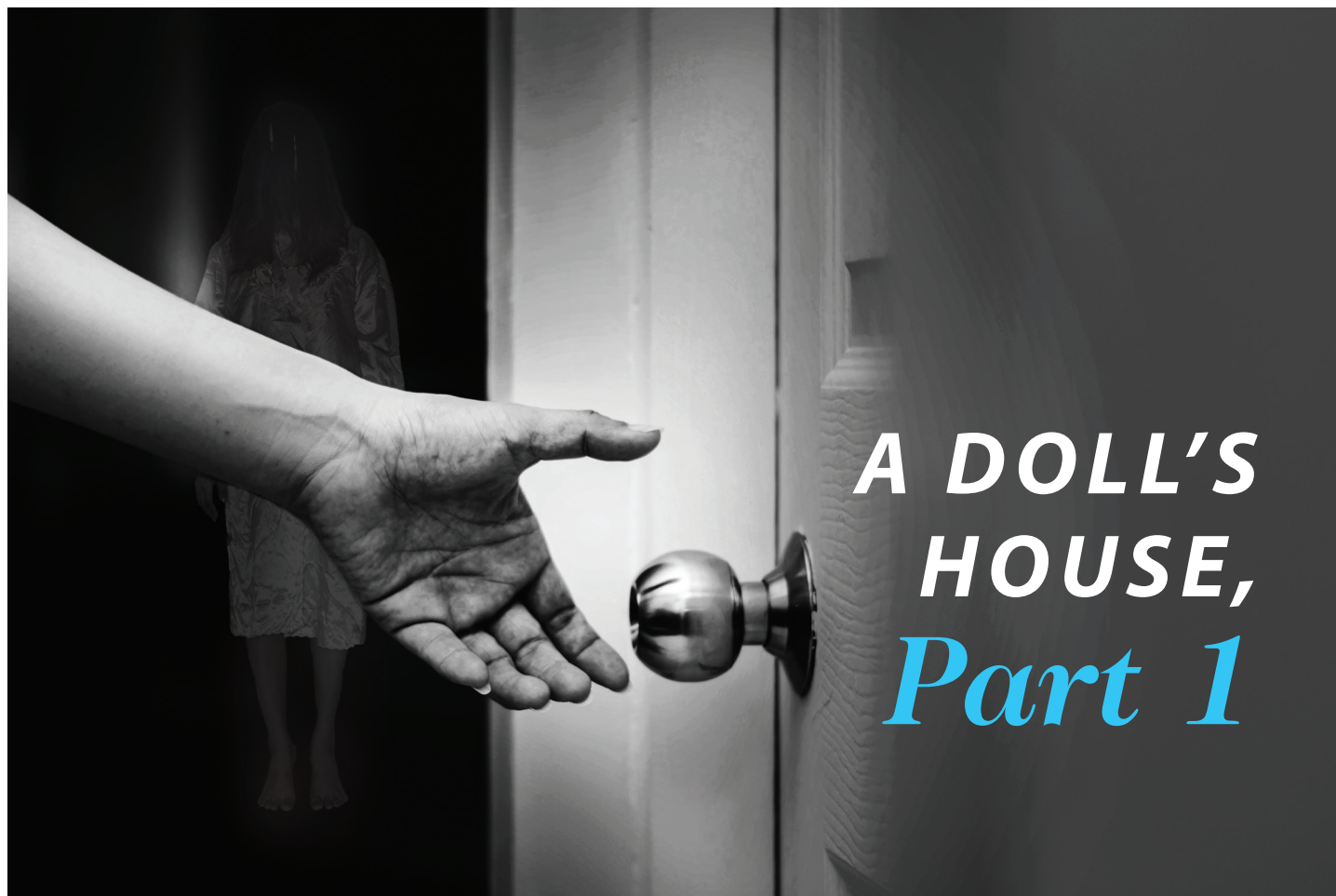


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A DOLL'S HOUSE, *Part 1*

BY MICHAEL STEWART

WHEN HENRIK IBSEN'S DEATHBED NURSE ASSURED A FRIEND THAT HE WAS "A LITTLE BETTER," IBSEN STERNLY PROTESTED, "ON THE CONTRARY!" Fittingly, those were the playwright's last words. Contentious to his last, Ibsen is perhaps best remembered for the fascinating, powerful protagonist Nora Helmer in his 1879 masterwork, *A Doll's House*. Lucas Hnath gathers up this remarkable legacy in *A Doll's House, Part 2*, and imagines what happens after Nora turns her back on her husband, her children and middle-class domesticity in the original play's sensational conclusion.

Ibsen's original play begins on Christmas Eve. Nora is celebrating her husband Torvald's recent promotion at the bank after years of penny pinching. Torvald constantly belittles Nora, scolding her for spending too much on gifts and sprinkling her with condescending pet names. Meanwhile, one of Torvald's underlings arrives to blackmail Nora, threatening her husband's new position. This danger stems from one of Nora's only independent acts: she illegally borrowed money to care for Torvald when he fell ill from overwork.

As the exposure of Nora's crime creeps closer, she begins to feel less like Torvald's partner and more like his possession, an ornament on his perfect, bourgeois life. Her fears are confirmed when she is finally discovered: Torvald cruelly insults Nora, calling her a liar, a criminal and an unfit mother. He soon recants—once he learns that his position at the bank is safe after all—but it's too late. Nora condemns his craven hypocrisy, refuses to be treated as a doll any longer, and walks out on her marriage and three children—slamming the door behind her.

That door slam reverberated across Europe. Not since Ancient Greece had a female lead so soundly rejected masculine dominance. Ibsen has been widely credited with creating the role of the modern woman in Western theatre—a woman no longer confined to narrow definitions of domestic servitude or motherhood, and whose mind and body are hers to govern as she sees fit.

The play premiered to great acclaim, but, as you can imagine, no small degree of controversy. Ibsen was ordered by the producers of the first German production to create an alternative ending (a move he later deeply regretted), in which Nora remains ultimately unable to leave »

her children. The work incited fierce debate about the roles of women and assumptions of male superiority. Eleanor Marx, daughter of Karl, organized one of the first productions of the play in English in 1886 to support the women's emancipation movement. The amateur affair took place in a Bloomsbury drawing room, and featured none other than George Bernard Shaw as Krogstad¹. For many, Ibsen not only shows Nora's liberation, but how Torvald is also enslaved by gender roles—and coerced into defending the bourgeois institutions that humiliate him.

But it's not only Ibsen's feminist principles that sparkle in *A Doll's House*; the Norwegian's trademark realism generated a bracing, intricate plot and some of the most memorable characters in twentieth-century drama. Nora's complex ethical code and awesome transformation have attracted many of the stage's finest talents, including Ethel Barrymore, Claire Bloom and Janet McTeer. Shaw's reading of Krogstad in Eleanor Marx's drawing room launched a love affair with Ibsen that lasted his entire career.

Nora announces her return in *A Doll's House, Part 2* with a loud knock on the same door she first slammed 140 years earlier. The grip Ibsen's Nora exerts on audiences hasn't weakened in the slightest; now that 15 fictional years have passed in the Helmer household since that decisive day, you can bet Hnath's Nora—now successful in her own right—hasn't lost her mettle. ▲

Michael Stewart is a freelance writer and an English instructor at Camosun College. He lives in Victoria.

1 Britain, Ian. "A Transplanted Doll's House: Ibsenism, Feminism and Socialism in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England." *Transformations in Modern European Drama*, edited by Ian Donaldson, Macmillan, 1983, pp. 14-54.



A Doll's House, Part 2 is a quintessential Belfry play: it is smart, engaging and kind of sassy. Its ideas have energy. Its questions have no easy answers and its debates have no clear winners. And there is an undercurrent of emotion that can catch you by surprise.

Based, of course, on Henrik Ibsen's classic play *A Doll's House*, Lucas Hnath's *Part 2* continues the conversation that ended when Nora Helmer walked out of the house and slammed the door, leaving her husband and three small children behind her. In the fifteen years since that famous exit, who has Nora become? and how have those most affected managed to pick up the pieces.

George Bernard Shaw held Ibsen in the highest esteem and, like many, credits him with creating contemporary theatre – and of doing so with *A Doll's House*. Shaw writes:

"Formerly you had in what was called a well-made play an exposition in the first act, a situation in the second, and unravelling in the third. Now you have exposition, situation, and discussion; and the discussion is the test of the playwright. The discussion conquered Europe in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*; and now the serious playwright recognizes in the discussion not only the main test of his highest powers, but also the real centre of his play's interest." This could have been written as a description of Lucas Hnath's *A Doll's House, Part 2*.

Michael Shamata, Artistic Director

Cast & Creatives



Martha Burns
NORA



Benedict Campbell
TORVALD



Barbara Gordon
ANNE MARIE



Alice Snaden
EMMY



Michael Shamata
DIRECTOR



Christina
Poddubiuk
DESIGNER



Kevin Fraser
LIGHTING DESIGNER



Tobin Stokes
COMPOSER &
SOUND DESIGNER



Jennifer Swan
STAGE MANAGER



Carissa Sams
ASSISTANT STAGE
MANAGER



Hilary Britton-Foster
ASSISTANT LIGHTING
DESIGNER

HILARY BRITTON-FOSTER'S PARTICIPATION MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE BELFRY'S EMERGING ARTIST ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM FUNDED BY THE RBC EMERGING ARTISTS PROJECT.

LIVE EVENTS



Throughout *A Doll's House, Part 2* we'll host a number of events that will deepen your theatre experience or just plain astound you.

B4PLAY

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15 AT 11 AM

Free Event. Join us in the Studio Theatre for a live talk show hosted by CBC Radio's Gregor Craigie and featuring director Michael Shamata, actor Martha Burns (Nora), Dr Peyman Vahabzadeh (UVic - Sociology Department) and Dr Lynne Marks (UVic - History Department).

AFTERPLAY

Facilitated discussions – audience member to audience member – will follow every evening performance of *A Doll's House, Part 2* (except Opening Night and Talkback Thursday). These are a great opportunity to share your thoughts and hear fellow patrons' reactions to the production and the ideas it presents.

TALKBACK THURSDAY

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

Meet some of the actors post-performance when they return to the stage to answer questions and provide insight into the play.

VOCAL EYE

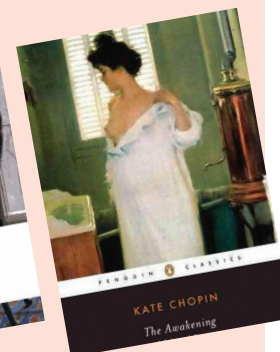
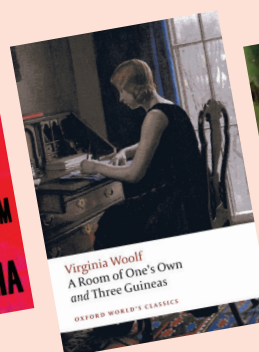
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7 AT 2 PM

For our patrons with low or no vision, we offer this VocalEye performance during *A Doll's House, Part 2*. Trained Audio Describers provide descriptions of the visual elements of the show, allowing people with low vision to enjoy the theatrical experience without missing any of the details.



Belfry Librarian

The wonderful librarians from the Greater Victoria Public Library have compiled a list of books and videos to help you get even more out of our production of *Salt Baby*.



The Awakening and selected stories
by Kate Chopin

A Doll House [Hoopla audiobook]
by Henrik Ibsen.
Full-cast performance.

Hedda Gabler and other plays by Henrik Ibsen

I Do... Until I Don't
[DVD]

A Master Builder [blu-ray] screenplay by Wallace Shawn, based on Ibsen's play *The Master Builder*

A Room of One's Own
by Virginia Woolf

Scenes From a Marriage
[DVD]

Free Women, Free Men: sex, gender, feminism
by Camille Paglia

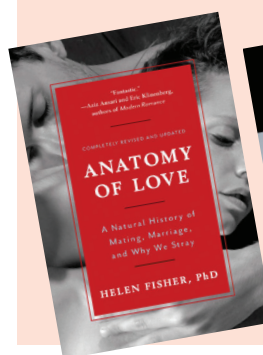
Build a Doll's House
by Michael Morse

I Don't: A Contrarian History of Marriage
by Susan Squire

Anatomy of Love: A Natural History of Mating, Marriage, and Why We Stray
by Helen E. Fisher

Who Gets the Dog? [blu-ray]

Compiled by L. Reynolds,
Library Assistant, Greater
Victoria Public Library





SPOTLIGHT ON SUPPORTERS

Dr. Steve Tax

Professor of Service Management and Francis G. Winspear Scholar
Peter. B. Gustavson School of Business, UVic

Growing up in Winnipeg, Steve's parents took him to the Manitoba Theatre Centre and he enjoyed performing in school productions. He believes that this early theatrical exposure contributed to his becoming a professor, which he describes as a "part scripted and part improvised" performance. Theatre has provided a lens to examine his three personal and professional interests – design, performance and story-telling. Steve extends this view to his study of service businesses – such as banks and airlines – which he examines as live performances with actors (employees and customers), a stage, costumes, props, lighting and scripts.

"Story-telling is a particularly effective way to generate attention and motivation. The Belfry does an excellent job of confronting topics in society and telling stories we often ignore." He notes that Belfry has recently shed light on issues including homelessness, Indigenous challenges, the Holocaust, and early-onset Alzheimer's.

"Being a member of the Belfry Director's Circle has contributed a great deal to my appreciation of theatre, as I enjoy learning about

how a performance comes together as much as watching the performance."

Steve contributed to our Capital Campaign because he knows the theatre experience isn't limited to what's on stage; it takes place from the moment you enter the building. "It seemed natural to support the campaign, as it's about making the Belfry a great place to work and visit."

Steve is proud to support a theatre that nurtures artists, and he appreciates that the Belfry contributes to the development of existing and new scripts. Forget About Tomorrow was one such memorable production; Steve enjoyed meeting playwright Jill Daum and learning about her artistic process.

Since first studying the Belfry production The Cripple of Inishmaan in 2001 for an academic paper, Steve has introduced many of his students to Belfry plays over the years. What's next? His latest project is to bring the Belfry's Associate Artist Deborah Williams and her storytelling workshops into the classroom.

For more information on the variety of ways to contribute to the Belfry including the Name a Seat program, please contact Susan Stevenson, Director of Development at 250-385-6835 ext. 229 or development@belfry.bc.ca

Calendar



A Doll's House, Part 2

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

September 16—October 14, 2018

Tuesdays – Thursdays at 7:30 pm

Wednesday Matinees at 1 pm
(September 26, October 3, 10)

Fridays & Saturdays at 8 pm

Saturday Matinees at 4 pm

Sunday Matinees at 2 pm

Free Childcare

Saturday, October 13 at 4pm

Audience Engagement Schedule

B4PLAY · Saturday, September 15 at 11 am

TALKBACK THURSDAY · September 27

AFTERPLAY · Following all
evening performances*

VOCAL EYE · Described performance
Sunday, October 7 at 2 pm

*Except opening night and Talkback Thursday

How to buy tickets

By telephone
250 385 6815

Please have your credit card ready, as well as the date and time of the performance you wish to attend.

Online
Visit belfry.bc.ca/tickets
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Joey Smith
Trio

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Up Next

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—November 25
2018

Mustard

by Kat Sandler

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