

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

Hedda Gabler

by Henrik Ibsen

**Adapted for the Sydney Theatre Company
by Andrew Upton**

Teacher's Resource Kit

**written and compiled by Jeffrey Dawson
August 2004**

N.B. This Resource Kit was written for the 2004 theatrical production of *HEDDA GABLER* and is not an accompanying guide to the film *IN THE COMPANY OF ACTORS*.

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Sydney Theatre Company's Hedda Gabler Teacher's Notes ©2004

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This Schoolsday performance of *Hedda Gabler* offsets perfectly the study of *A Doll's House* which is a prescribed text for the HSC Advanced English: Extension 1 Topic: The Individual and Society.

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1. CAST AND PRODUCTION TEAM

Sydney Theatre Company presents *Hedda Gabler*

CAST

Jorgen Tesman – Anthony Weigh

Hedda Tesman - Cate Blanchett

Juliana Tesman – Julie Hamilton

Thea Elvsted – Justine Clarke

Judge Brack – Hugo Weaving

Ejlert Lovborg – Aden Young

Berthe – Annie Byron

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director - Robyn Nevin

Set Designer – Fiona Crombie

Costume Designer – Kristian Fredrikson

Lighting Designer - Nick Schlieper

Composer - Alan John

Adapted by Andrew Upton

Stage Manager - Mary Macrae

Assistant Stage Manager – Georgia Gilbert

2. THE SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

Sydney Theatre Company produces theatre of the highest standard that consistently illuminates, entertains and challenges. It is committed to the engagement between the imagination of its artists and its audiences, to the development of the artform of theatre, and to excellence in all its endeavours.

Sydney Theatre Company has been a major force in Australian drama since its establishment in 1978. It was created by the New South Wales Government, following the demise of the Old Tote Theatre Company. The original intention was to better utilise the Drama Theatre of the Sydney Opera House and the new Company comprised a small central administration staff, technical staff, workshop and rehearsal facilities. Richard Wherrett was appointed Artistic Director from 1978 to 1990.

Smaller existing professional theatre companies initially provided the back up support necessary to stage large-scale productions, without disturbing their existing activities. An interim season of six plays was staged in the Drama Theatre from January 1979, with the participation of The Paris Company, Q Theatre and NIDA/Jane Street Company. The Company began its own productions a year later and plans began for the development of its own premises at The Wharf, Walsh Bay, which were approved in November 1980. The Wharf was opened on 13 December, 1984 by Premier Neville Wran, which allowed all departments of the Company to be housed under one roof for the first time. The venue was to become the envy of the theatre world. From 1985 the Company could perform in two venues throughout the year, the Drama Theatre and The Wharf.

In September 1999, CEO/ Artistic Director Robyn Nevin, AM, launched her first season for the Company.

At present STC operates out of its home venue, The Wharf, comprising two theatre spaces on Sydney's harbour, and the Drama Theatre and the Playhouse of the Sydney Opera House. In 2002 the Company presented Robyn Nevin's production of *Major Barbara* at the Parade Theatre at NIDA. The Company also tours productions across Australia and internationally.

In 2004 STC has opened its state of the art 850 seat theatre situated on the site of the old Bond Stores opposite Pier 6/7 on Hickson Road, Walsh Bay. **Sydney Theatre** is designed as a specialist drama and dance venue and will provide the missing link between the Drama

Theatre (seating 544) and Sydney's larger venues such as the Opera and Capitol Theatres. It offers STC the opportunity to expand the range of work we both produce and present.

The predominant financial commitment to Sydney Theatre Company is made by its audience. Of this audience, the Company's subscribers make a crucial commitment. The Company is also assisted annually by grants from the Federal Government through the Australia Council and the New South Wales Government through the Ministry for the Arts. STC also actively seeks sponsorship and donations from the corporate sector and from private individuals.

STC's annual subscription season features up to eleven plays including recent or new Australian works, as well as interpretations of theatrical classics and contemporary foreign works. While these productions are the core of STC's activities, our work reaches a variety of audiences in many different ways. STC regularly co-produces and tours its productions throughout Australia, playing annually to audiences in excess of 300,000. STC actively fosters relationships and collaborations with international artists and companies.

STC's commitment to Australian work is paramount and, in 2004, the Company features five Australian plays, (both new and extant), in its mainstage program. In addition to its subscription season, new commissions and play development programs, STC produces Education and Writing programs, and a major art form development stream, *Blueprints*, offering an alternative to mainstage work.

For further details, check our web site: www.sydneytheatre.com.au

3. THE PLAYWRIGHT : HENRIK IBSEN - 1828-1906

Chronology

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

- 1828** Born 20th March at Skien, small but prosperous shipping town. Father runs a successful general store and import business.
- 1835** Father ruined financially. Family forced to retire to small country house.
- 1841** Wants to become a painter but family cannot afford tuition.
- 1844** Moves to Grimstad to take up his first job as apothecary's assistant.
- 1847/49** Studying hard for matriculation. Outstanding as young radical in conservative town. Writes first play, ***Catiline***.
- 1850** Moves to Christiania to make final preparations for matriculation, in which he does poorly. Living in extreme poverty. His second play, ***The Warrior's Barrow***, accepted for production by Christiania Theatre.
- 1851/57** Appointed Manager and Resident Playwright for the new Norske Theatre in Bergen. Receives thorough training in all aspects of stagecraft. ***Olaf Liljekrans*** his first big success.
- 1857** Takes up position as Artistic Director of the Norwegian Theatre in Christiania. A very bad period for Ibsen: his theatre despised by main theatre in the city, the Christiania, for its attempt to perform plays in Norwegian instead of the prevalent Danish. Frustrated by poor actors in company and the need to produce French farces and vaudevilles.

- 1858** Marries Suzannah Thoresen. Risks producing his ***The Vikings*** with his inexperienced company and it receives very good reviews.
- 1859** Son, Sigurd, born.
- 1862** Theatre files petition for bankruptcy.
- 1863** Appointed Artistic Consultant at Christiania Theatre. ***Love's Comedy*** published but reviewed very harshly. Finances very low. Application for pension rejected. Later in year receives small travel grant.
- 1864** Production of ***The Pretenders***, the last play Ibsen directs. Denmark threatened by Germany: Norway and Sweden delay assistance. Attacks Norway in furious poem. Leaves Norway and begins what is to become long, self-imposed exile. Reaches Rome in June.
- 1865** Relaxation in the Italian sun and his great love for the Renaissance painters, particularly Michelangelo, brings a new vitality to his work. Writes volcanic play, ***Brand***. Finances indifferent.
- 1866** ***Brand*** published in Copenhagen. Immediate and widespread sensation: four editions by December. Relief from financial worry at last: annual pension from King and a new travel grant. Law created in Norway to allow women the right to work in any trade or profession.
- 1867** ***Peer Gynt*** published: companion piece to ***Brand***. First edition sells out almost immediately, but very mixed reception - phantasmagoric style. Last play to be written in verse.
- Karl Marx writes *Das Kapital*.
- 1868** Settles in Dresden, where he remains for almost 7 years.
- 1869** Writes ***The League of Youth***, an attack on the liberals of the day. Lionised for the first time in his life at a conference in Stockholm. One of the Norwegian guests at the opening of the Suez Canal. John Stuart Mills' essay *On the Subjugation of Women* is published.

- 1874** Approaches Grieg to compose music for possible production of *Peer Gynt*. Visits Norway for the first time in 10 years.
- 1875** Settles in Munich. Receives gold medal from King Oscar to celebrate his 25 years of authorship.
- 1876** First publication of Ibsen play in English: *Emperor and Galilean*, immense double play. First production of *Peer Gynt* in Norway.
- 1877** Having moved to Germany, Ibsen had been searching for a new style. Found it in *The Pillars of Society*, which assailed the business community; this became the first of 12 plays, appearing at 2 year intervals, that confirmed his standing as the foremost dramatist of his age. Here Ibsen began to be preoccupied with realistic problems of personal and social morality. Hence the start of a prolific playwriting period for Ibsen.
- 1879** *A Doll's House* won Ibsen more enemies with its assault upon the hypocrisy of modern marriage and its defence of the emancipated "new woman." Here a wife who had been treated like a child, walks out of an unhappy marriage.
- 1881** *Ghosts* published. Violent criticism. Publisher asked to accept return of copies. No public performance allowed in England until 1914. A key work in modern theatre - one of the first to convey a theme counter to conventional sexual morality and to theatre conventions as well. Its reference to venereal disease produced a storm of violent criticism.
- 1882** *An Enemy of the People*: here Ibsen replied to his critics, identifying himself with the idealistic physician who reports that his community's mineral springs are polluted and finds himself isolated by his neighbours, who cannot stand the truth.
- 1884** *The Wild Duck* - completed in apparent disillusionment. Married Women's Property Act in Britain deems that women are no longer "chattel" but are autonomous people.

- 1885** Stockholm production of *The Wild Duck*, directed by August Lindberg. Important landmark in theatrical history - anticipated the naturalism introduced years later by Antoine at the Theatre Libre, Paris.
- 1888** *The Lady from the Sea*
- 1890** *Hedda Gabler*: a drama of individual conflict and a partial return to social themes – published and staged throughout Europe.
- 1891** Ibsen returns to live in Norway.
- 1892** *The Master Builder*
- 1893** Munch paints *The Scream* in Christiania.
- 1894** *Little Eyolf*
- 1895** *John Gabriel Borkman*
- 1898** 70th Birthday. Feted in Christiania, Stockholm and Copenhagen. Honoured everywhere with published tributes, gala performances, torchlight processions and banquets.
- 1899** *When We Dead Awaken*, his last play, published.
- 1901** Suffers first stroke. For the last years of his life, Ibsen, crippled by two strokes, could not write and could only speak with difficulty. He liked to sit at his corner window gazing out, and tourists would stand in the street below to catch a glimpse of him. Three months before his death, Eleonora Duse, the great actress, came to Christiania for the first time, largely in the hope of meeting the playwright who had provided her with her greatest triumph, Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea*. Women were first allowed to vote in Norway.
- 1905** Second stroke.

1906 Dies 23 May.

The Norwegian Government grants him a state funeral. The hammer, the sign of the miner, carved on his tombstone in honour of one of his greatest poems, *The Miner*.

"This Norwegian playwright is often called the father of modern theatre. His plays may lack humour but they are superbly constructed, very moving and richly symbolic."
(David Self, *The Drama and Theatre Arts Course Book*, Macmillan Education, London 1986)

TILT - THOUGHTS ON THE ADAPTATION OF HEDDA GABLER BY ANDREW UPTON.

Unexpected, even these days. Modern still. This way Ibsen has of tilting the story and unbalancing the dynamics between the characters. The challenge of adapting the play lies in getting this... tiltedness. In this failed heroism. This failure of Heroism. The unsettling dissatisfaction we feel as audience at the cross purposes of the character's negotiations. At the cross purposes of the character's reality and their skewed ideal of themselves. Because in fiction, as in memory, the tendency is to smooth over or idealise. The tendency is to make sense. Sense in a vacuum, where everything fits into place. It's being there means it must have a place in the overall sense. The ideal sense.

In my application to the adaptation I came to realise Ibsen's mastery of the separateness of people. That in an exchange Hedda may think something apparently similar to Judge Brack or Ejlert Lovborg - they may even seem to agree - and yet, what each has understood is profoundly different and consequently sets them on very different paths. It is from this conflict, the conflict of understanding, that the drama is born.

The dogma for writers these days is 'tell the one story', but Ibsen can tell seven and thus create this enormous, constantly shifting work. The perception of what it is possible to create within the confines of theatrical Naturalism is often limited, something more akin to chamber music. A sonata of grievances, but this is not so for *Hedda Gabler*. In *Hedda Gabler*, Ibsen has composed a symphony of misunderstanding.

4. HEDDA GABLER – CONTEXT

Ibsen wrote *Hedda Gabler* when he was 62. It was published in 1890 and had a wide reading audience like most of Ibsen's middle and later plays.

NOTES ON SOCIAL STATUS IN NORWAY, 1870'S – 1890'S

These notes are an hierarchical description of Norwegian society of the times of the play. Artistic Associate for STC, Tom Wright, informs us that issues of social status came up occasionally in rehearsal, particularly with reference to the four female characters.

MEN

(Swedish) royalty governed Norway

Nobility were still largely Danish since Black Death times.

The next level were academics, school teachers, priests, civil officers.

"Bonders" were prominent, whose families owned their farms outright.

Farm 'users' came next who were leasing small farms from the owners.

"Foderaad" couples (who had turned over the farm to others), widows followed on.

Craftsmen such as shoemakers, smiths, stonemasons, carpenters.

"Husmenn" and families (provided contract help on a farm).

Servants hired out at age 15 or younger.

The "good-for-nothing" Danish or Swedish soldiers stationed in Norway
Beggars, menial laborers. Many were orphans or illegitimate or both.

WOMEN:

Royalty

Aristocrats

Bonder women, the White Collar Classes i.e. wives and daughters of
civil servants, army officers, academics, doctors

Widows, Foderaad, Governesses, "Paid Companions"

Seamstresses, cottage-industry workers

Rural tenant-farm women

Servants

Beggars and vagrants

Used with permission of Dr. Lawrence Opsahl:

www.geocities.com/~valdressamband/social.html

SUICIDE

"With Hedda there is deep poetry, deep down. But her surroundings frighten her. Consider it, the scandal of ridicule."
Ibsen

Here follows a contextual study of society's attitude to suicide in Ibsen's era.

In the late nineteenth century the attempted suicide rates among women of all ages and classes was four times higher than that of men. However the success rate among men was nearly four times higher than that of women. Despite the attempt rate, the eventual figure was that nearly three men were able to complete suicide for every woman. (Lewes, Blackwood's) This is because women chose 'less violent means of intervention' (Durkheim), preferring drowning and poison to guns. **Women shooting themselves was rare.**

Suicide rates were roughly the same across Europe but were higher in Protestant societies than Roman Catholic ones, and higher again in Scandinavia. However the proportion of men to women, and success to failure, was constant across Europe and America.

In spite of these statistics most of Ibsen's contemporary writers argued that suicide was principally a male affair and a male act. It was not until the writings of Horsley, a prison chaplain, became widespread in the 1890's that the true picture emerged. He argued suicide was 'predominantly' a female 'crime'.

Most of the nineteenth century writing on female suicide was full of assertions and assumptions about innate feminine qualities that led to such behaviour. Male suicide was often viewed as decisive and authentic, or the product of insanity. Female suicide was treated as exemplary of their irresolution and timidity. For example, Strahan believed women's attitude to suicide was tempered by women's lack of courage and her natural repugnance to personal violence and disfigurement.

Havelock Ellis argued women were liable to choose methods that involved less preparation and less gore. Suicide offended women's sense of propriety and their intense horror of making a mess. If it were possible to find an easy method of suicide by which the body could be entirely disposed of there would probably be a considerable increase of (successful) suicides among women.

The nineteenth century studies of the subject have an inherent prejudice in favour of bloody suicide, such as shooting or throat-slitting, as it was seen as braver and more manly.

Women were inculcated to believe "that their ideal of character is the very opposite of that of men, not self-will, and government by self-control, but submission and yielding to the control of others" (John Stuart Mill). Such people, sentiment ran, would hardly be bent toward self-destruction, for they lacked the fortitude to kill themselves. On the other hand, should they run counter to both statistics and expectation, their inherent weakness was at fault. Others had been even less generous to women. The famous case of Mary Brough, who slit the throats of her six children and then unsuccessfully tried to kill herself in the same way, raised enormous hostility - more because of Brough's "long-indulged self-will" than because of the child murders. Brough was reported to have been an unfaithful wife who became deranged as a result of her immoral life; her insanity was consequently "self-created" (Winslow) To most Victorians, self-will was unnatural in woman - an indication that something was radically wrong.

Women with willpower struck a different chord with women writers. When Anna Jameson wrote about Cleopatra in her book on Shakespeare's heroines, her imagination thrilled to the "idea of this frail, timid, wayward woman dying with heroism from the mere force of passion and will".

See also Notes on The Romantic Suicide; Classicism & Romanticism in the theatre program for this STC production, edited by Laura Scrivano.

PLATONISM, ROMANTICISM AND THE ACT OF WRITING

"This material comes out of the central pivotal issue of what binds and yet destroys Hedda and Lovborg. It relates to the Platonic/ Romantic notions of heavenly perfection which are sullied by earthly manifestation, and the concomitant need for an authentic life (like Hedda's father) instead of the mediated one (like Tesman)."

Tom Wright.

'The *Imagination* then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary *Imagination* I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite *I Am*. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the *kind* of its agency, and differing only in

***degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.'* (1:304)**

Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Ch. 13

So, what Løvborg has written is just a dissolution, a diffusion, a dissipation of the higher work of imagination that lies within his soul. The book is merely a pale shadow of the great Book; according to the romantic ideas of Platonism, becoming immersed in writing such a work weakens the beauty of the idea. The key question for him should be how to live his life, not get involved in paltry documents which make him no better than Tesman. It reduces the writer to a cataloguer, a librarian, instead of a heroic figure. The Romantics idealised men of action like the General who endeavoured to be authentic and live life as their great creative project, rather than seek to describe it in some pallid reproduction. Writing is a worthy occupation, but should not be confused for a truly creative act; the leading of a strong, beautiful life.

Platonism in literature: the notion that there is an ideal, perfect form to all things and ideas, that can be only partially grasped by the human mind in moments of inspiration ('imagination'), but when written down or spoken inevitably result in fading, weakening, compromise and confusion. For this reason it was argued it was better to live life strongly and heroically than dabble in the base reproductions of ideal forms that literature represents.

Tesman starts with the reduced, the miniscule. His study of domestic crafts acknowledges no idealised higher purpose, his aspirations are little more than a list-writer, an archivist. He seeks only to describe, not to create any grand unified vision. Løvborg by comparison is seeking to reach beyond his imaginative scope; not just know history but understand at least some of the true Platonic form of things and so even hubristically comprehend the future. It will only ever be a pale shadow of the moment of imagination that inspired it however, and Hedda would rather the inspired, imaginative man (Ejlert) than the petty child (the book). In destroying the child she seeks to create the man.

N.B. The issue is what Løvborg has to do to himself in order to write; i.e. become a small man, a man of denial and weakness, captive of woman (Thea). Hedda wants the inverse: vine leaves in his hair.

5. ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Some background information in these Notes is from Director Robyn Nevin (RN), Set Designer Fiona Crombie (FC), Costume Designer Kristian Fredrikson (KF), Lighting Designer Nick Schlieper (NS), actors Cate Blanchett (CB), Hugo Weaving (HW), Justine Clarke (JC), Aden Young (AY), Anthony Weigh (AW), and Annie Byron (AB) at the Subscriber Briefing for this STC production at the Wharf Theatre, Monday 19 July 2004.

(RN) – *Hedda Gabler* caused ructions and a strong reaction when it was premiered in 1890. It used fractured sentences, like the language of everyday people, the people in the audience. It appeared 11 years after *A Doll's House*. Andrew Upton has further refined the text to be lean and essential, fine and spare, with room for subtext. This is achieved through fractured ends of sentences. STC has a policy of commissioning its own translations of the classics. Our adaptors start from a literal translation of the play that we supply them with.

(AU) – This clipped, “simultaneous” use of dialogue is deliberate to modernize the impact of the text, providing a freshness and a presence. The text uses missed phrases and sentences, lost words and sentences which provides unending intrigue. The play is like a real series of interchanges, with changes in mood states. For instance, Hedda is mischievous and wicked, dark and sombre. Yet the play is genuinely funny at times too. It's about a family!

(CB) – There are so many meanings, shadow meanings, metameanings and spareness in the text that are not imposed by this production, but from Ibsen. Hedda is a warrior's daughter and is good at war games, with no sense of consequences.

(FC) - The design is based around a glass enclosure and a fireplace. It represents the duality of heavy and light, (black curtains and tall windows). The actors have had the luxury of nearly two weeks on the set itself, with an extra week shaved off the rehearsal room.

(KF) – This was a delicate and rigorous process developing costume designs for the elusive Hedda who is an enigma like *Hamlet*. The Tesman home is loveless when we see it, not really being a ‘home’ to anyone.

(NS) – The design requires the lighting to make the characters feel enclosed, verging on claustrophobia. Yet the set can be opened and freed up by opening the heavy black curtains, giving the characters feelings of entrapment then freedom. They veer between the two.

(AJ) – I have used a musical metaphor of a mental battlefield in the music for this production. I had seen Nora as a caged bird in *A Doll's House* and used mostly woodwind instruments, and for *Hedda* I wanted to contrast the times of decorum then shifting alliances using scene changes involving explosive kettledrums and trumpets. The bursts of music have wild *Wuthering Heights* energy.

(AU) - The play is intimate, like chamber music, a symphony of misunderstanding.

(AW) – Tesman is not represented as a fool in this production as he has been in some. Andrew Upton has cut many of the jokes that were at Tesman's expense. He is a creative spirit confined in a spiritless society.

(AU) – Tesman is not the butt of Hedda and Judge Brack's jokes in this adaptation, even though he is an academic who does domestic craft. He is not a 'duffer' here. Some translations are creaky and old.

(CB) – I wanted to know what to play against, so I read research on the class structure and social climate of the times in Norway, to discover a social setting of the rules and memories in Hedda's life, to create a living, breathing entity. Although there is an important dynamic in the text, I wanted to find meaning in the silences. It is a dense and complicated play with many storylines running simultaneously. The play deals with issues about becoming a woman (Hedda is 29 in the play) and being womanly and being pregnant.

(RN) – Hedda is a significant hostess, a role she has come to after her honeymoon.

(HW) – Judge Brack is about 44. He is somewhat older than Hedda and has known the General. There is a social layer on top of the context.

(RN) – *Hedda Gabler* has been a major experience, a journey for us all. I have been transported somewhere else. It is like the ultimate keyhole play, where the audience peers into the Tesmans' private world. It is like being around their house.

THE DIRECTOR - ROBYN NEVIN

Robyn Nevin has been a leading actor in Australia since the early 1970s, a director since the early 1980s and the artistic director of flagship theatre companies, Sydney and Queensland Theatre Companies since she was Associate Director of the STC from 1984-87. She has won many awards.

The first play she directed was Mil Perrin's *Is This Where We Came In?* for STC in 1981, *The Recruit* by Tony McNamara in 2000, and the last was Andrew Upton's *Hanging Man* as well as ten other productions for the Company. Last year's STC season was benchmarked by Robyn's memorable production of *A Doll's House*.

Regarding *Hedda Gabler*, Bryce Hallett said in his *SMH* review, "Robyn Nevin's staging is carefully measured and assured and well served by Kristian Fredrikson's splendid costumes and Fiona Crombie's roomy, suitably museum-like digs... There's no doubting the polish of the strong, committed ensemble or the energy and depth of Blanchett's remarkable performance. With many a sure, comical and robust touch – and stillness when it's required – Nevin draws keenly on the ensemble's individual instincts and talents." Nevin's direction is clear and concise here with a startling addition in the last act.

Colin Rose says in his "Smitten by Blanchett's siren call" review in *The Sun-Herald*, (Sunday 1 August 2004), "Nevin's production is reverential but not embalmed, elegant but not stuffy, engrossing, psychologically piercing and just beautifully performed." Robyn has also successfully directed many premieres of Williamson's plays, including *After the Ball*, *The Great Man* and *Corporate Vibes*, as well as a production of *The Removalists*.

Robyn Nevin's film roles include *Matrix 2*, *The Castle*, *Angel Baby*, *Emerald City*, *Careful He Might Hear You* and an award winning role as Jocasta in the television mini-series, *Water Under the Bridge*.

See a transcript of Robyn's illuminating lecture "**Getting to Know the Theatre; and Imagining What it Might Be**" in Katharine Brisbane (ed.) *The Parsons Lectures – The Philip Parsons Memorial Lectures on the Performing Arts 1993-2003*

SET DESIGN BY FIONA CROMBIE

*Reference: Laura Scrivano, "Caging the Eagle: Interview with STC's Resident Designer Fiona Crombie about her inspiration for her elegant design - transforming Wharf 1 into the world of **Hedda Gabler** - from STC'S subscriber publication, **Currents**, Vol. 22 No. 2 May 2004*

CAGING THE EAGLE

Outline the set design for *Hedda Gabler*.

The play is set in Hedda's house, just after she and her husband have returned from their honeymoon. So I was very conscious of creating a setting but not a home. It is an unclaimed space because they have just arrived. Henrik Ibsen is very specific about the set so that needs to be addressed. With this design the exterior has become really important. That is a large part of the look of the space, all these windows and a world that you can't quite see outside. Making rooms private and then opening them up allows the space to be quite versatile. It can go from an intimate space to a vast space.

What has influenced your design?

My initial impulse had a lot to do with creating a beautiful cage. There is this entrapment that Hedda has through society and her choices and all manner of things. Andrew Upton (the adaptor) said there is a beautiful formality to *Hedda Gabler*. That was important to me, to find an elegant formality in the look of the room. This room is so heavily described, not only in the layout of the space but also in the writing. Hedda says she hates the house and everyone else is in love with it. You have to find a way to address all those things so the audience can see it can be both of these contradictory responses.

How much did the original text inform your design?

I read various different adaptations and then connected each. More poetic things effected me as well. The concept mainly came through talking to Robyn Nevin (director) and my instincts. We haven't really been too concerned about exactly what architecture was like in Norway in 1890 – I have looked at only a little of that. We would not be able to achieve what we are going for if we got caught up in that kind of realism.

What is it like designing the set and not the costumes?

This is the first time I have been the set designer and not the costume designer. Kristian Fredrikson, the costume designer, doesn't colour his costumes until he has started the process, until they start buying. So he sits back and waits for the set designer to resolve the colour issue, which means that he is really sympathetic to the set and the palette of the set. The thing with being a set designer is that you are involved with the whole conceptual world of the play. In my work as a costume designer I have been involved towards the end of a process where the set designer and the director have gone through this entire journey together and then I tag on and have my little abbreviated journey. So it's been great to be in it from the beginning.

What elements of the play is the design highlighting?

It highlights the societal limitations of the times. Hedda never actually goes anywhere during the play. For someone who has so much drive and spirit she is really aware of what can and can't be done. She is very socially aware and of appearing to be the right kind of person. What's happening outside is this intangible thing, this other side of the glass that she never gets to. There is also a real austerity to this space. It's not a lived in space – it should never feel like they have made themselves at home because they haven't. It is a cold room.

What are attractions of designing a classic play like *Hedda Gabler*?

The attraction is that it's such a proven great work. It is so involved and rich and has already been honed and refined. Some people might say, "Well the set has to be a room and it is already defined" but the way I like to work is to find the intricacies and the details. You can find so much that can exist within those constraints. That is one of the most fascinating things about designing. It's also about working out the psychology of the space and what you can say by having windows, curtains, chairs and doors and how you can underscore things in the play without overstating it and giving the game away. It's about supporting the text.

When the audience walks into the space what do you hope will happen?

I would rather they not notice the set because it works so well than walk in and go "Wow that is the most beautiful set and it completely stole the show", but I am not in much danger of that happening! The

set has to function and I don't want the audience to think, "What are they doing? Why is that there?" I would rather it just feel absolutely natural because the thing is, it is not completely natural. We have constructed it in a way that serves our needs in terms of space and in terms of an aesthetic. I want them to go, "Yep that makes perfect sense and now lets get on with the show".

PERIOD: The action of *Hedda Gabler* takes place in the Tesman's new villa on the west side of the town, where they have arrived the night before, after their five month honeymoon. The location is Christiania, now Oslo. In 1890 the population of Christiania was approximately 150,000. It was relatively isolated from the major European capitals. (A town in Tasmania would be a contemporary Australian equivalent.)

Upton says in his stage directions the setting is "*a big, dark drawing room. Curtains, drawn against the light, swathe the French doors that give onto an autumnal garden beyond. Through the doorway at the back of this main room, part of another room can be seen. Hanging on its wall, a portrait of the General himself – Hedda's father. The room is well-, if slightly over-, furnished. Among the furnishings, a piano and two separate seating areas, including a sofa. The room is heated by a black porcelain pot-belly stove..... The whole impression is of people on the move – in or out? Half unpacked. Not settled. With all the flowers, it might even be a deceased estate in the process of being divided.*" The furniture has had covers on it, of which Hedda doesn't approve. The glass doors are termed "the Brack Passage" by Hedda in Act Three.

Hedda calls her new home "a funeral parlour" where fresh air and light are called for. The piano is moved to another room from Act Two onwards. Judge Brack calls it "a lovely house. Your dream house," to Hedda in that act on page 37. She had told Jorgen before they married that she thought it was the most beautiful house in town; "It turns out, he'd actually thought that, all his life. Well, every time we passed it? It became this one thing we had in common. Soon enough we were standing at the gates for an hour or two at a time. Just talk I thought, but for Jorgen they were plans. It was the only place I could possibly live. Before I knew it, it was like, I was some Princess locked in his fairy tale. Then, he was proposing and offering me the house, the honeymoon. The world." - but now she hates the neighbourhood.

About the interior she says, "The furniture's fine, of course. But there's

a smell. I just hope it's some concoction of his witch Aunt's." (p.38)

The set encompasses two rooms in the new Tesman home set in an elongated stage space on a parquet floor. It includes a mantle piece, a tiled fireplace and French windows and doors, draped in black curtains, and is dressed with a portrait of Hedda's father. Stage furniture includes two chaises longues, a piano, side tables and foot stools.

*See the definitive text on stage design in this country, Kristen Anderson and Imogen Ross' **Performance Design in Australia**, Craftsman House Sydney, 2001. p.219:*

The Wharf Theatre: Wharf 1 at the Sydney Theatre Company

"Wharf 1 is essentially a large rectangular room with the audience seated on steeply raked tiers on three sides facing the long wall, in front of which is a relatively small acting platform. The ceiling throughout is defined by a grid which is used for the stage lighting and is divided and dominated by a large metal beam.

The audience looks down and into the performance space; the performer faces and looks up and at a (fourth) wall of audience. The audience and performers share the space.

The designs that are most effective in this space are those that raise the acting platform above the stage floor by at least a metre and re-orientate the focus of the room across one of the long diagonals; it is difficult to 'distance' the audience from the performers or the performers from the audience. Vertical placement of the dramatic space can be most effective. Audience reception of the performance varies considerably from seating position to seating position."

The Wharf is wide but shallow.

COSTUME DESIGN BY KRISTIAN FREDRIKSON

Hedda wears an afternoon gown, holding a smoking gun in Act Two. Hats figure in the costume design as well, such as the floral one that Aunt Julle wears in the first scene. Jorgen wears an overcoat and "outside gear" at the start of Act Four. Thea leaves with a hat and overcoat in Act Four. Fredrikson's designs are sumptuous in brocades and silk/satins, including the gun-metal dress in the last act.

*Reference: Adapted from Tom Bannerman's entry on Kristian Fredrikson in Philip Parsons (ed), **Companion to Theatre In Australia**, Currency Press Sydney, 1995, p. 236*

*Kristian Fredrikson designs for theatre, dance, opera, film and television. His gorgeous designs for **A Doll's House** included corsets and big skirts. There was also the fancy dress costume for Nora and the formal wear for Torvald for the masquerade party they attend in Act Three. "Fredrikson's designs are layered, chunky and bold in their attack on the eye. Landmarks in his career have been commissions for big occasions with energetic directors like George Ogilvie in Melbourne for the MTC on Chekhov's **Three Sisters** where he expressed disillusion by restricting his palette to black, white and greys." His eye-catching period costume designs were last seen on the Drama Theatre stage in the STC production of Sheridan's Restoration masterpiece, **The School for Scandal**, directed by Judy Davis.*

LIGHTING DESIGN - NICK SCHLIEPER

The action of the play is contained within a 36 hour time span. The time is nearly September, 1890.

The play opens with "*watery morning light filling the drawing room,*" after Aunt Julle draws open the heavy curtains on the garden doors.

Act Three opens with Tesman *scrupulously* closing the curtains that give onto the garden. *A quick shaft of soft morning light behind him.* There is also *a lamp smoking on a table by the couch.* *Soon Grey daylight pours in* when Hedda throws the curtains open again.

Reference: Jeni Porter, Sauce column in The Sydney Morning Herald Weekend Edition, 31 July-August 1 2004

Given Hedda Gabler's theme of darkness and light, it's fitting that the production, with the headline Hedda - our Cate Blanchett - is so dark. Literally.

Each act of the Sydney Theatre Co production, which opened this week, emerges from the dark and in the first half there is one whole minute of total blackout with nary a bright green exit sign in sight in the Wharf 1 auditorium.

According to Sydney Theatre Co's publicist Patrick Shand, although the exit signs are blocked out, the one minute dark spot is "fully within the safety guidelines and regulations".

"It's manually done and fail-safe if there's an emergency," he said. Evidently the lights are turned off through a single switch operated manually so they can easily be restored in an emergency.

Shand said they did something similar for a Barrie Kosky production of Oedipus four years ago.

The darkness creates the opportunity for some David Copperfield-like magic. After Blanchett's Hedda demands that a piano be moved from the drawing room to her study, the upright piano which was sitting at the right hand back of a stage cluttered with several chaise longues, miraculously appears stage left in the next scene where Blanchett appears to play it.

So how did they get a piano so swiftly off and on stage in darkness with only Alan Johns's discordant music to disguise any bumps?

"We would like to leave it a mystery at this point in time," said Shand, promising that designer Fiona Crombie would reveal all at the end of the sold-out season.

Reference: Kristen Anderson and Imogen Ross, Performance Design in Australia, Craftsman House Sydney 2001 p. 70

Here Schlieper describes the "dramaturgical function" of lighting in performance, using light and shadow to "underscore" an apparently solid world: "I think you (as a lighting designer) have an enormous influence on the emotional climate on stage. The word 'atmosphere' is always bandied around a lot when talking about lighting. It goes way beyond those obvious things of dark and bright, gloomy or not gloomy. You can underscore so much and sometimes you do the very reverse - you juxtapose - an emotional climate, an emotional atmosphere. And it needn't be one that's obvious at all on the surface

to an audience. Indeed, it is better when it is not."

Nick has lit productions for most of the major performing companies in Australia, as well as working regularly in Europe.

See also Rex Bunn, Practical Stage Lighting, Currency Press Sydney

Max Keller, Light Fantastic, Prestel Publishers, N.Y

How does lighting contribute to the mood of any of these scenes?

COMPOSER - ALAN JOHN

Alan John's music opens the production with a restless interlude as Hedda lies on a chaise longue, which sets the tone for the audience. His often discordant music composition later includes a wild dance melody played in an inner room on piano by Hedda. This is like the tarantella in Act Two of ***A Doll's House***. Critic John McCallum commented on the 'score' for that production in ***The Australian*** that "Alan John's music creeps in at moments of high emotion, dwindling to the simple sound of the winds of change during Nora's splendid final scene," in the manner of a soundscape. For ***Hedda Gabler***, Bryce Hallett has said "The production is couched in Alan John's music of battle and foreboding."

Robyn Nevin says that, "Alan doesn't confine his interest to the job of composing but responds as a dramaturg or an actor or writer might. His instincts and judgment are to be trusted." Alan John writes "opera and film music and good theatre music."

Here Alan John describes his composition concepts for this production of ***Hedda Gabler***.

The music is connected to Hedda's secret (and suppressed) state of mind and to the world of her father (a 'warrior' but ironically of the armchair variety - another repressed and insufferable hothead one presumes). It's wild, scary and on an epic scale that's impossibly (pathetically?) at odds with the mean little world of the play. The orchestral palate and musical imagery is that of the battlefield or the duelling field - in the opening cue measured heavy timpani rhythms - shades of the soundtrack for Kubrick's film ***Barry Lyndon*** - underpin a noble trumpet tune (possibly representing or foreshadowing Hedda's belief in the possibility of a 'beautiful death' - the captured General's

honourable suicide).

Brooding dark strings gradually weave around it. It's unashamedly Capital 'T' Tragic in tone- the comedy of the ensuing scene seems all the more effective in its wake.

The scene changes are frenetic and I hope terrifying at times - trumpets tumble over each other or scream in pain (c.f. Ligeti's *Requiem*) while timpani, snare drum and multiple harps play relentless galloping rhythms- is this the soundtrack to the young Hedda's mad rides in her black cape?

A timpani motif holds the whole thing together. I just realised today the model is *Katya Kabanova!* It is taken from the left hand of the piano piece that she plays - a mad and obsessive piece based closely on Schubert's *Moment Musicaux No.5*. In order to play it at speed she would need to attack the piano (the gnome- her bitter soul? her father? everything outside of her amoral *Wuthering Heights* ideal that she must battle with?) rather like a lioness bringing down a zebra. Fortunately in the new version we get to see her wrestling with the piece prior to Act 4. As her swansong, unseen by us- it's performed without a mistake and is only cutoff by the po-faced shooshers on stage."

6. HEDDA GABLER: ABOUT THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

Hedda Gabler was written by Ibsen in Munich in 1890 and was to be set contemporarily.

To familiarise yourself with the story, read through the play synopsis below. Write down your initial response to the story, which you can reflect back on, after you have seen the play. Then perhaps read a more detailed synopsis online.

**"He snuck in.
The back way.
Like a common criminal."**

It's nearly September....

Another summer gone. A six month honeymoon with her academic husband spent in libraries researching his specialty (*Domestic Crafts in Medieval Brabant.*)

And now Hedda is home to an oversized house, a life of debt and herself.... The willful daughter of an old world General.... A fierce free spirit terrified of scandal and gossip.... An exhibitionist who can't bear to be seen.... A terrible knot of contradictions and complications.

Her only confidante, Judge Brack, preys on her and will not rest until he has the upper hand.

And then Thea Elvsted – an old classmate – brings the brilliant, dissolute philosopher, Eilert Lovborg, back into Hedda's life. Lovborg and Hedda are soulmates. But Thea is his evangelical alter ego, encouraging him to stop drinking and begin writing again.

In a blaze of jealousy, desire and thwarted ambition, Hedda ruthlessly orchestrates all their fates. And when events finally outrun her...?

Hedda Gabler is Ibsen's greatest play. Hedda Gabler – the woman – is his most magnificent creation.

"Modern audiences relate to Hedda in a way that 1890 playgoers did not because she is a character both of her time

and shockingly ahead of it." Susan Faludi, 2001

PLOT (STRUCTURE)

"Don't let's have any more of these reminiscences, I tell you. You don't know how you're tormenting me, raking up all this"

In these three unforgettably intense plays, Henrik Ibsen explores the problems of personal and social morality that he perceived in the world around him and, in particular, the complex nature of truth. *The Pillars of the Community* (1877) depicts a corrupt shipowner's struggle to hide the sins of his past at the expense of another man's reputation, while in *The Wild Duck* (1884) an idealist, believing he must tell the truth at any cost, destroys a family by exposing the lie behind his friend's marriage. And *Hedda Gabler* (1890) portrays an unhappily married woman who is unable to break free from the conventional life she has created for herself, with tragic results for the entire family.

Andrew Upton's translation renders Ibsen's naturalistic dialogue in fluent modern English.

In *Hedda Gabler*, there is no character of importance pitted against Hedda as an effective counterpoise. Tesman the dull pedant, Lövborg, the debased Dionysus figure, and Brack, the suave diplomat all bring to light some aspect of Hedda that aids in her eventual self-destruction. The two minor women in the play act as correctives to Hedda's unappealing selfish personality. The whole play pivots upon Hedda and every speech in the play is directed towards the main purpose, the revelation of Hedda's character. As the center of the play is not a problem but a personality there is less emphasis on the story and its links of cause and effect. The play develops in an episodic manner.

Act I gives a full picture of the Tesman household and illuminates all the main problems. Act II introduces the rivals, Lövborg and Brack, and Hedda's first attempt to play with destiny and thwart Mrs. Elvsted. Act III is given up to the story of the manuscript and ends with Hedda's triumph. Act IV springs the trap and undoes the triumph, forcing Hedda to accept her own counsel and use the second pistol.

When the curtain rises in Act I, George and Hedda Tesman have just returned from their honeymoon. Tesman has just been awarded a doctorate and is now known as Dr. Tesman. He is stuffy and scholarly and does not understand the questions Aunt Julia asks

about a baby. He had married on the strength of being awarded a professorship in the university. However, his appointment is in jeopardy because, as Judge Brack informs him, his rival Eilert Lövborg is also competing for the post. Hedda is very cold, formal and rude with Aunt Julia, but she behaves in a very warm and cordial manner with Mrs. Elvsted because she wants to extract information from her. She gets to know that Mrs. Elvsted has taken the bold and daring step of leaving her husband and has followed Lövborg to town. She is afraid that with the success of his new book and money in his pockets, Lövborg will again revert to his dissipated ways. Therefore, she asks Tesman to invite him to his house so that he will not fall in the wrong company.

In Act II, a series of encounters occur with men in Hedda's life. Brack, an old friend, attempts to contract a "triangular friendship" with Hedda. It is through her interactions with him that the audience finds out that Hedda married in order to be secure, emotionally, financially, and socially. The audience also discovers that Hedda can be vicious as when she commented on the rude behavior of the maid for leaving her hat on a chair, knowing that it was Aunt Julia's. In this scene, Hedda's pistols come to the forefront as symbols of protection. She points them at Brack, foreshadowing his later attempt to seduce and extort her. Lövborg is also introduced in this act. He is now a reformed character and has left his days of dissipation behind him. He and Hedda had been close friends, but when the friendship threatened to develop into something more serious she broke it off, for she dreaded a scandal and was not ready for a sexual relationship. She sees Lövborg only in an idealized fashion and the newly reformed Lövborg does not conform to her romantic view of him. Therefore, she attempts to reclaim his former self by goading him to drink. When Hedda sees that Mrs. Elvsted's influence over Lövborg is considerable, she sets out to destroy it. She also betrays the secret Mrs. Elvsted had confided in her in order to break the trust between Lövborg and her. This results in Lövborg's defiant action of drinking and attending Brack's bachelor party. Hedda feels that she has liberated Lövborg and that, like Dionysus, he will return with "vine-leaves in his hair".

Although he is supposed to return at ten that evening to ostensibly accompany Thea home, Lövborg never shows up and the two women end up spending the evening together. The next morning neither Lövborg nor Tesman have returned so Hedda tells Thea to go upstairs and get some rest as they has not slept all night. After Thea goes upstairs, Tesman returns. He tells Hedda that he is

envious of Lövborg because the manuscript he has written is brilliant. He also describes Lövborg's drunken behavior at the party and says that he was so drunk that he did not even notice he had dropped the manuscript on his way home. Tesman had picked it up and brought it back with him. Tesman says he will return it when Lövborg has recovered from his drinking binge. Hedda takes the manuscript and says that she will give it to Lövborg later. In the meanwhile, news has arrived that Tesman's Aunt Rina is dying and he leaves to attend her bedside.

Judge Brack enters the scene and gives Hedda the sordid details of Lövborg's excesses, saying that at present he was in the police station for assaulting an officer. After some time, Lövborg arrives at Hedda's house just as Thea is waking up. He tells her to go back to her husband because he is not going to write any more and that he has torn up the manuscript. Mrs. Elvsted accuses him of killing their 'child' and leaves. When left alone with Hedda, he confesses that he had lost the manuscript during the previous night's debauchery and feels absolutely awful about it. He confesses that he would like to die. Hedda gives him one of her pistols and tell him to "do it beautifully." When she is left alone she burns the manuscript and declares, "Now I am burning your child, then! Your child and Eilert Lövborg's."

When George Tesman recovers from the shock of Aunt Rina's death, he asks Hedda for the manuscript. When Hedda tells him that she has destroyed it because Lövborg was his rival, he is distraught yet also thrilled at her loyalty. She also confesses that she is pregnant and his joy knows no bounds. He agrees to keep silent about the manuscript.

Mrs. Elvsted returns to Hedda wanting confirmation of the rumors going around that Lövborg was shot and is dying in the hospital. Brack shows up and confirms what Elvested fears: Lövborg is dying from having shot himself in the chest. Hedda is thrilled that he has so courageously gone ahead and killed himself. Tesman regrets that fact that Lövborg died without bequeathing the world "the book that would have immortalized his name." Providentially, Mrs. Elvsted has the notes of the manuscript in her pocket and she sits down with Tesman to reconstruct his Lövborg's book. When Brack is left alone with Hedda, he tells her that Lövborg did not die voluntarily. Instead he was shot in the bowels, a humiliating and ignoble way to die, either accidentally or by a nightclub singer. The realization dawns on Hedda that everything she touches turns "ludicrous and mean." Moreover, the pistol can be traced to her if

Brack were to identify the pistol. Finding that she is completely in Brack's power and fearing the inevitable scandal, she commits suicide by shooting herself in the temple.

REPRESENTATIONS:

To summarise, the main representations of *Hedda Gabler* are: individual conflict, self delusion, power in relationships and inner journeys.

Reference: Brian Moon, Literary Terms A Practical Glossary, Chalkface Press, Scarborough, WA, 1992 p. 109:

"**Representations** are textual constructions which refer to habitual ways of thinking about or acting in the world. Although they seem to refer to the "real world", they actually refer to the cultural world which members of a society inhabit.... Representations cannot be judged on the basis of 'accuracy.' Instead, they must be evaluated in terms of their social effects." p.108.

Hence Ibsen is (re)presenting us with characters and their stories which permeate with the audience.

Representation has been defined as "the act or an instance of representing or being represented. A thing especially a painting or image that represents another. A statement made by way of allegation or to convey an opinion.

A representation is a selectively constructed media depiction. It is necessarily built on 'shorthand' information and often, (but not always) includes generalisations and assumptions.

The word **representation** can be a loaded term. One meaning describes a media construction which has the potential to project a stereotypical stance by virtue of the fact that any media representation is constructed. Therefore representation can imply limitation, construction and thus be experienced as disempowering. A second meaning alludes to action, presence, making visible, giving voice, as in political or artistic representation. Applied in this context, the word "representation" holds connotations of empowerment.

To represent: to stand for or to correspond to. To act as an embodiment of or a symbol. To call up in the mind by description or portrayal or imagination. To place a likeness of before the mind or

senses. To serve or be meant as a likeness of.

Stereotyping: a routine or standard image of a person, event or object. It is often uninformed and works by categorising according to some (presumed) distinctive features, such as accent or mannerisms. Stereotypes are not always unfavourable.

Also see www.linknet.com.au/atol a brilliant site for notes on representation and other concepts of critical literacy.

CHARACTERS

Jorgen Tesman – a scholar engaged in research in the history of civilization; has been on a honeymoon with Hedda for 6 months. His Aunt Julle informs us he is “a gifted man in his thirties.” (Act One, p.4) He is very unromantic, having spent his honeymoon researching his next thesis, collecting resources, visiting libraries etc.

Hedda acknowledges in Act Two that Tesman is “a man of learning.” (p.33) Then she says to Judge Brack, “He’s a terribly hard worker... He has prospects. Ambition, certainly. And I feel his commitment to me sharpens that for him. In that way, we’re good for each other. He wants me to live. Properly. And I spur him on. To (greatness). More... But it is a match and a damn sight more than my countless admirers ever offered.” (p.34).

Yet she is cynical about love: “Don’t bandy that over-rated word around me. Love is how people sweeten obligation. It is a lie. And when I wasn’t obliged to wait in hotel rooms while he fossicked around in libraries? Then it was my obligation to listen to the history of Brabant and the domestic improvements and blah, blah, blah.” (p.33)

Hedda Tesman – Jorgen’s wife; the willful, “steadfast” daughter of an old world General, a fierce free spirit terrified of scandal and gossip, an exhibitionist who can’t bear to be seen, a terrible knot of contradictions and complications; vengeful and cowardly, bored and manipulative.

In 1890, Henrik Ibsen premiered *Hedda Gabler*, a play questioning the role of women in Victorian society. Some audiences have viewed Gabler as a woman driven to desperation simply because her world has turned out to be less charmed than she hoped. For others, she is a victim of her times, unwilling to devote herself, as was expected of her, to the duties of home. Andrew Upton has brushed away the cobwebs, and he serves as an ambassador from Ibsen's age to our own, preserving the intensity of the original but translating it into a spare, contemporary idiom. His adaptation provides an opportunity to understand the play through a lens shaped by feminism and a theatrical tradition beginning with Beckett. Trapped by the conventions of her age, Gabler is both a martyr and a female incarnation of Vladimir and Estragon, longing for a salvation that will likely never arrive.

We're informed by Aunt Julle that Hedda is "General Gabler's daughter. Remember her riding out with her father every morning past our place? In that long black cape? And those. Hats." (Act One, p.3) At the end of the act, she describes herself as "a warrior's daughter."

From the outset of the play, there are many indications of Hedda's obsessive nature: "She's very insistent.... She doesn't like covers on furniture." (says Berte, p.4) Jorgen tells us that she travelled on their honeymoon with a lot of luggage and she couldn't stand being separated from it." (Jorgen tells Aunt Julle in Act One) When we see Hedda with other characters for the first time, she "begins pulling all the flowers out of the vases and dumping them into a canvas bag." (p.11) Julle tells us that Hedda "always looks so lovely."

Jorgen tries to position his wife: "You're part of my family now." (p.15) She is sarcastic about his recent doctorate: "Dear Dean of History, thank you for my throbbing Sinus and my sodden Hankie." (p.15) She tells him to invite Lovborg over "from the brink," and to "Make it sound like an invitation extended to him to ... talk of our honeymoon and. Catch up generally. Don't be too obvious and cursory. And don't mention Mrs Elvsted's visit. (p.20)

In Act Two, Hedda enters holding a smoking gun – a pistol, one of two treasured, custom made pistols from her late army general father's collection. She soon berates Brack about love: "Don't bandy that over-rated word around me. Love is how people sweeten obligation. It is a lie. And when I wasn't obliged to wait in hotel rooms while he fossicked around in libraries? Then it was my obligation to listen to the history of Brabant and the domestic improvements and blah, blah, blah." (p.33) She has missed Brack on her honeymoon: "I could have

done with a friend, some days... This is merely a pause on the road. The journey continues." (p.34) But now that she is living in what was her dream home, she decries "that dead smell. Bitter rot. Like flowers on the turn. Christ. I'm going to go mad here." (p.39) And later in this scene she adds, "The sound of my own endless voice droning on till the end. Boring and boring the life out of me. That is what I hear. All day."

Hedda thinks her husband is clever and "manipulative enough" to be the Prime Minister, but her confidant Judge Brack doesn't think Jorgen has the funds nor the beliefs to be a politician; Hedda says in frustration, "It's always going to be that. Isn't it? These.. Shabby. Shabby. Circumstances. I've ended up in. That's what makes you think my hopes are ludicrous. Money. That's what it is." (p.39) She tells Jorgen later that she has told Brack how bored she gets, but the judge states, "idle hands are the devil's playground, " while her husband believes "My Hedda can be a devil alright." (p.42) She says superficially "Friendship can be pledged in other ways. You two drink, there's probably much to discuss financially. I'll keep Mr Lovborg company. I'll show him our photos, Jorgen, and regale him with the endless adventures of our startling honeymoon." (p.47)

Power struggles ensue in Act Three when Hedda argues with Brack about Lovborg.

Brack: It would be very difficult for me if he (Lovborg) was to find his way ...

Hedda: Into the triangle? (*Jorgen-Hedda-Brack*)

Brack: It would have to be. Him. (*Lovborg*) And her. (*Thea*) And all the small town gossip. Or me?

Hedda: An ultimatum? But you're on the back foot?

Brack: I am. But I'll fight. And with all the means I have at my disposal.

Hedda: To be the only cock in the yard?

Brack: Certainly.

Hedda: You are. Serious. So long as you have no hold over me. I am nothing to do with this tawdry affair. I couldn't bare you to have the upper hand.

Brack: Of course. Of course but. I think you should be more careful in your decision. None-the-less.

Hedda: Are you threatening me?

Brack: No. I'd only hope that our little triangle would be defended from within. Not held together by. Pressure.

Hedda: I couldn't agree more.

(It's a stand off.)"

In Act Four, Hedda *clasps and wrings her hands* when she tells Jorgen that she has burnt Lovborg's manuscript. She says, "I'll perish. In this. I'll disappear with all this... It's all this stupid ... frivolity." (p.79) He short-sightedly sums up the situation: "We'll just have to. Keep that to ourselves... I mean as a sign of your burning passion for me? Hedda I'm truly thrilled and I will never forget it. But otherwise we must be quiet about it and. I wonder if? **It is perhaps normal for an expectant young wife to. Be so full of zeal.** And, in that way. What you did. Perhaps it's normal? For a young wife?" (p.79)

Near the end of the play, she says presciently, "Everything is so. Petty and dirty and little. Everything I touch is. Mean." (p.88)

Juliana Tesman (Aunt Julle) – Jorgen's aunt, "*a busy older woman in a rather special hat*" when we first meet her. Her sister Rina is ill and later dies. Julle presciently says in Act One, "God bless and protect Hedda Tesman. For our sake." (p.14) Later Hedda indicates her response to Aunt Julle, when she points out "there's a smell. I just hope it's some concoction of **his witch Aunt's.**" (p.38) Aunt Julle feels "strange to bring news of death (Aunt Rina's) into this house of life." (Act Four, p.74) Jorgen tries to reassure Hedda in Act Four that she will find Aunt Julle "a source of great wisdom and comfort." (p.79)

Thea Elvsted – an old classmate of Hedda's (she was Thea Rysing) – brings Lovborg back into Hedda's life. Thea is Lovborg's evangelical alter ego, encouraging him to stop drinking and begin writing again. He had taught Thea's children, living nearby. Thea is now the second wife of a district magistrate, having been his family's governess. She mostly addresses Jorgen, rather than Hedda. She reminds Hedda that she (Hedda) used to bully her at school, pulling her hair, to which she confesses, "I pulled everybody's hair." Thea says, "But now we are in. Different worlds... I didn't realise you considered me a friend, Miss Gabler," to which she replies, "Call me Hedda." (p.21) Hedda warms to Thea again when the latter says she married her boss after his first wife died. At the end of Act Two, Hedda and Thea discuss power in their marriages in a very clipped manner:

Hedda: You think to keep him (Lovborg) weak? You think that's your answer?

Thea: I don't.... I'm not. Keeping anything. I just -

Hedda: Can't you see? He needs to rise above it. Out of it. From within that cauldron of his head. Hot and high and wonderful. With Vine Leaves in his hair. Not.

Thea: I hope you're right.

Hedda: Doubt him as much as you like. I believe in him. That is how he will be free.

Thea: I didn't realize you were so. Invested in the situation.

Hedda: It's. A hobby I've taken up. Seeing what it's like to have control over someone's life. You (*Simultaneous*) seem to enjoy it.

Thea: (*Simultaneous*) Surely... you've.

Hedda: Never. Probably not even now.

Thea: What about your husband?

Hedda: No and even if I could what's that? Paltry. But you? What you have? You are so ... (*She hugs her passionately.*)

Eijert later rejects Thea, and all interest in his book, in which Thea had invested her soul.

Judge Brack – Hedda's only confidante – ["I make a better friend. A confidante, that is the service I offer." (Act Two, p.34)] Brack preys on her and will not rest until he has the upper hand. We see him as "dapper" when we first meet him; Hedda says, "Daylight suits you, Brack." To which he replies, "I see it occasionally." (p.25) He admits he is in the category of one of Hedda's "countless admirers: "Of course the man in the house (Tesman) must not be alienated. It's a triangular relationship that I find works best." Judge Brack doesn't think Jorgen has the funds or the beliefs to be a politician, whereas Hedda thinks her husband is clever, "manipulative enough" to be the Prime Minister. In Act Two there is a stage direction which tells the actor, "*Brack is always keeping an eye on the proceedings.*" (p.47) He never vacillates from doing this, even as he is leaving the room. Later in Act Two, Hedda says, "I wish I could slip into your pocket, Judge Brack." (p.57)

In Act Three, Brack postulates that "Sometimes. Late at night. Men are not as principled as they would like to be during the day." And Hedda asks, "Even an eminence like yourself?" To which he replies, "Bright days often end in the darkest of nights." (p.65)

In Act Four, Brack starts to piece the whole story together, beyond the triangle he has been preoccupied with. He tells Hedda: "I've been trying to make sense of the stolen soul and the kidnapped child imagery. And I thought he was talking about the manuscript? You know? In poetic terms?" Soon he has the upper hand – but will he sustain this position?

Brack has the last line of the play.

Analyse this speech and scene after you have seen the production.

Ejlert Lovborg - brilliant, dissolute philosopher, comes back into Hedda's life. Lovborg and Hedda are soulmates, Now Lovborg's teetotal, Hedda suggests to her husband Jorgen that they "could triangulate over tea." (p.42) Thea and Lovborg have been comrades. He has recently successfully published one book and has a new edition manuscript. Lovborg has a competitive friendship with Tesman. Thea was a positive influence on Lovborg, calming him down and helping him to give up drinking. Later translator Upton informs us in Act Two in a stage direction for Jorgen, Hedda and Brack that "*they are all very lost in their own concerns.*" (p.41) Thea tells Hedda, "there was always the shadow of another woman between us... From his past. One he's never forgotten." (p.24)

He has finished the second part of his thesis on "the forces of history that are baring us into the future." (p.46) Yet he isn't interested in the professorship. You can have your professorship, Tesman. Good luck to you... These arbitrary academic divisions? Between the humanities and the sciences. The past and the future? I am not interested in them? Society as an evolving whole. That is the task at hand." (p.46) In Act Three, Hedda further idealises Lovborg after reading his book, when she asks her husband, "Did he have Vine Leaves in his hair? Was he like a man..." (p.61) To which Jorgen replies incredulously, "Vine leaves? In his mouth, perhaps. It was terrible....And to think I'd been privy to these incredible insights only a couple of hours before. And then after dinner, to be witness as he stood and delivered this incoherent diatribe on society and the need for the spirit of woman and how women help in his work. Or something." (p.61) There is a further *vine leaves* reference on p.73.

Later Hedda gives Lovborg a gift of one of her father's custom made pistols – with disastrous results at Diana's boudoir. Hedda has an astounding response which she tells to Judge Brack in Act Four:

Hedda: I have to say this whole thing with Lovborg is a real release.

Brack: A release? I suppose, for him -

Hedda: I mean for me. A release to know that something can be done. That a person can do something of their own volition, that is beautiful.

Brack: Beautiful?

Hedda: If you can't see the beauty, you're more conventional than I thought.

Brack: What I can see is that Ejlert Lovborg meant more to you than you care to admit. Even to yourself.

Hedda: I've no interest in. Sentiment, Brack..... Lovborg had the courage to live life his own way. And to die as he chose. When he was ready." (Act Four, pp.86-87)

Berthe – the Tesman's servant; '*a breathless serving woman at the end of her tether,*' "in this big new house. So big and the new mistress. And she's so...." (Act One, p.3) Hedda is very short-tempered with Berthe at times.

7. THE PRODUCTION - GENRE (REALISM, DRAMATIC IRONY) AND STYLE (REALISTIC)

REALISM

Realism was a modernist movement, initiated by Emile Zola with his novel, *Therese Raquin*. The aim of the realists was to reproduce events in the style of an historical/scientific document. The realists were influenced by scientific scholarship at the time e.g. Darwin.

Shakespeare sets the scene for Naturalism in *Hamlet* when he tells the First Player, "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end both at the first, and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."
(Act III, scene ii Lines 16-25)

There are nonetheless many features of realism evident in *Hedda Gabler*:

Careful attention to detail in motivation of characters, costuming, setting and dialogue

Individual and complex characterisations

Exploration of rivalries between characters producing complications within the action

Performance in period realism – even using as part of the stage design an enclosed stove instead of open fire, a labelled book for Lovborg's treatise and authentic duelling pistols.

See also Brockett's History of the Theatre p412

IRONY - In Greek comedy the character called the eiron was a 'dissembler', who characteristically spoke in understatement and deliberately pretended to be less intelligent than he was, yet triumphed over the alazon - the self-deceiving and stupid braggart. In most of the diverse critical uses of the term "irony" the difference between what is asserted and what is actually the case, or dissimulation, defines the ironic situation. (page 80)

DRAMATIC IRONY involves a situation in a play in which the audience shares with the playwright knowledge of which a character is ignorant; the character acts in a way grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or expects the opposite of what fate holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that he or she means it. (page 82).

STYLE (REALISTIC)

linear, modernist, realistic - in the form of Aristotle's *Poetics*, meaning that the play has a beginning, a middle and an end, following one logical sequence from beginning to conclusion.

8. DRAMA - PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

1. Present a transcript of a television interview with one character from each of ***Hedda Gabler*** and other texts discussing the individual and society as demonstrated in these texts. Each student leader in a group of 4-5 members could act as host or anchorperson of the show. Students should consider what interest group might be served by the ways of thinking and speaking as represented by their response.
2. Research the ground breaking production of ***Hedda Gabler*** by Russian theatre director/theorist, Vsevolod Meyerhold, famous for his emphasis on anti-illusionistic theatre.

DRAMA POST PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

1. Adaptor Andrew Upton employs the stage direction *Simultaneous* throughout his play text. Each actor who is interrupted in a scene of overlapping dialogue must have a sense of continuation.

Reference: Colin Rose, "Smitten by Blanchett's siren call" review in The Sun-Herald, Sunday 1 August 2004, p.S27

"Andrew Upton's adaptation of the text is... admirably lean, sinewy and direct, and he's found some fine jokes to brighten the Norwegian gloom. But, as was the case with his original play, ***Hanging Man***, his stylistic quirks can be intrusive.

Characters talk over the top of one another, often in one-word sentences. I don't. Like. It."

As director of a production of ***Hedda Gabler***, how would you direct your actors to fulfil this direction? What is your trigger word? You could perhaps rehearse the following scene with the missed out words put back in, to get the sense of the overlapping thoughts and words. Practise speaking the simultaneous dialogue and filling in the gaps. Now do you agree or disagree with Colin Rose's view of Upton's use of simultaneous dialogue?

Act One, p.19

Jorgen: When's that second (Simultaneous) edition out?

Hedda: (Simultaneous) I suppose your husband was too busy.

Thea: This weekend. My husband?

Hedda: I imagine he is away a lot as (Simultaneous) the district magistrate. So he sent you.

Jorgen: (Simultaneous) We'll have to get a copy, Hedda.

Thea: Yes. And I was down here anyway, also. Stocking up for the winter. The winters are very long. So ... terribly ...

Hedda is looking at Thea smiling lightly.

Jorgen: I hate missing out on a first edition. I have such a collection of first editions. And I think I've got most of Lovborg's stuff.

Thea: That's right, Doctor Tesman. I know that you are and he are. (Simultaneous) Friends.

Jorgen: (Simultaneous) Peers. Exactly.

Compare with the following scene from Brecht's ***The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*** Scene 4, 27:

GIRI: (A GANGSTER, slaps BOWL, an accountant on the back) bowl, I Believe you've set a wheel in motion, which...

BOWL: I hope you'll pay me back for any loss.....

GIRI: Don't worry about that. I know the boss."

*See also John Hughes' chapter, "Teaching Plays as Theatre" in Wayne Sawyer, Ken Watson and Eva Gold (ed.) **Re-Viewing English**, St. Clair Press, Sydney 1998, pp.292-293 for a brief analysis of the interpretation of stage directions.*

2. Actor Cate Blanchett features in a portrait in an undefined black

costume in the publicity campaign for the play. Is she in role as Hedda Gabler or is it a publicity shot? What can you tell about the play from this STC poster image of the play? How do you interpret this poster featuring a portrait of Cate looking straight into the responder's eyes, without any written text? This poster for a drama has a darker background than those for the comedies in the STC season which are usually lighter and more colourful, have you noticed? Comment on the font style of the title lettering. N.B. There was no flyer/press advertisement for this production as part of a marketing strategy, as the entire season is fully booked out!

3. **RESEARCH:** Stanislavsky "life off-stage" exercise. The great Russian acting theoretician, Constantin Stanislavsky, says in his manual *An Actor Prepares*, based on the reality of the character, the actor needs to find the nucleus of the role based on the character's reality both on and off-stage. Hence the actor needs to explore the "life off-stage" of the character. Explore the times of Hedda and/or Tesman and/or Judge Brack, and/or any other character in the play. (See the following reference: <<www.sts.online.org>> - Stanislavsky Theatre Studio.

4. **EUROPEAN DRAMA:** What concerns did/do Norwegian dramatists want to present to their audiences? How did they use dramatic forms, conventions and styles to achieve this? Refer to Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, and his representation of night and day, gossip etc.

5. PRACTICAL TASKS

Using freeze frames, chart the emotional journeys through the play, of Hedda Gabler, her new husband, her soulmate, her old classmate, her maid, and/or any other character in the play.

Playbuild around the representations of individual conflict, self-delusion, power in relationships and inner journeys as they relate to Ibsen's play. How would you organise the dramatic structure of the piece to reveal the inner turmoil of the characters?

6. EXTENSION SCENES

How would Hedda explain her reaction to Lovborg's death if she were to verbalise it? Stage an interior monologue as Hedda hears more details which leads to her own tragic decision. This could also be done

as a duologue with Judge Brack. (See Section 11 for this scene.)

What do you imagine Jorgen's future life to be like? Brainstorm ideas around the difficulties that he might encounter after the end of the play, perhaps publishing his and Thea's reworking of Lovborg's treatise posthumously. Use these ideas as a stimulus for a piece of drama that examines the compromises he might make.

Using hotseat or role circle techniques to investigate Hedda's character in more depth to find out how she may have retreated into an inner world. Through improvisation try to understand her character's point of view.

7. KEY THEMES THROUGH DESIGN

See the definitive text on stage design in this country, Kristen Anderson and Imogen Ross' *Performance Design in Australia*, Craftsman House Sydney 2001. This invaluable reference also includes an extensive bibliography on set and costume design.

(Robyn Nevin's production is being done in period realism, right down to using an enclosed stove instead of open fire, and authentic duelling pistols.)

DESIGNING HEDDA GABLER: SOME IDEAS

1. Re-read the play. Draw up some initial ideas for presentation to the director. Your ideas must be generated from the seeds planted by the playwright.
2. Identify the main representations of the play and any other sub-issues. Read any stage directions for possible ideas; Ibsen gives the designer many pragmatic tips to work from.
3. Examine all variations - different ideas and opinions. Present some initial ideas to the director, having researched the period etc.
4. The designer and the director of the play must agree on the mood or tone of the play. The designer and the director discuss the play. - How is it going to be staged? What style is the play going to be

(Realist)? In what period is the play set and performed? – e.g. in period - 1890/2004?

5. Is there any symbolism (hidden meaning) in the play?

6. Evaluate all available options.

7. The designer must check his/her ideas about staging a play, to see that they meet the director's basic needs.

8. List some ideas about the atmosphere. These may be enhanced later by the lighting and sound designers and by the composer.

9. When the director has his/her initial ideas, he/she meets with the designer and formulates some concept ideas. These are solid ideas which can then be used to build up visual concepts. The designer then spends some time designing some "visuals" based on research which can then be presented to the director and production manager and thence to the cast and other Company members.

10. At this stage, a set model is built to scale. The 3 dimensional model helps the director and actors to visualise the production. This also helps the designer to see how his/her ideas would appear in 3D form. It allows the designer to move about and see the set from different angles and to position model characters in different scenes.

11. How does the set design show the tension between the past and the way it impacts on the present? Relate this back to the themes of the play.

8. USE OF SPACE/SET

How does lighting contribute to the mood of the scenes?

How do the actors use the space to convey the shifts in relationship and narrative?

Why do you think that STC has produced *Hedda Gabler* at the Wharf Theatre rather than the new Sydney Theatre?

9. RESEARCH

Read about some of Stanislavsky's approaches to character acting. Imagine that you were an actor preparing to play one of Ibsen's characters.

Complete the following exercises:

Write notes about "what if"- what would you do if you were in that character's position?

What is your character's super-objective? (i.e. their overall goal in the play)

Emotional recall - try to remember an event in your own life that is similar to the situation in this play. In your mind recreate the circumstances of that moment. Afterwards reflect upon whether it helped to recreate the emotion required for your chosen character.

10. **DRAMA JOURNAL ENTRY**

Write a journal of your Schoolscopy excursion to see *Hedda Gabler*. Did Robyn Nevin's production live up to your expectations? What are your thoughts a few days after seeing it?

ENGLISH PRE-PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

WRITTEN AND ORAL TASKS

1. *Hedda Gabler* suits a unit of study of the *Individual and Society*.

This unit requires students to explore through Ibsen's play and their own supplementary texts how the individual and society represents the world from certain viewpoints, personalities or situations. Students evaluate how perspective and choice of language influence meaning. In their composing and responding, students consider the emergence of power and its various manifestations. Students explore the ways in which *Hedda Gabler* and other texts (like *A Doll's House*) depict the inter-relationship of the individual and society for a range of audiences and purposes.

CONTENT

Consider the individual and society. Refer to: Brian Moon, *Literary Terms A Practical Glossary*, Chalkface Press, Scarborough, WA, 1992. Re-introduce the term *representation* in relation to *Hedda Gabler*.

Social and political discourse.

Power relations that exist between parents and children: (e.g. Hedda and her army general father, now deceased) or between state and citizen. Consider Ibsen's context juxtaposed with yours today.

Consider situations where power is evident which could be textual or experiential.

One student has said "Henrik Ibsen was truly the Father of Modern Drama! His plays are much more "in-tune" with today's life than many scholars want to believe or will admit. Hedda was a powerful woman, who on the surface appeared to be confined by a dress, imprisoned in a man's house, and smothered by a male-dominated society. It would appear that Thea Elvstead was the woman with more control, but this is not true. Hedda was a calculating "bitch" who dared (quite shrewdly) to cross over her set-in-stone "boundaries," manipulate others, and stand back and watch others' lives be destroyed as a result. But when she is backed into a corner by the "new" creative couple (Tesman & Thea) and Judge Brack, she takes the final power into her own hand. How ironic that the power is her late father's pistol. How tragic is her death when it was the ultimate control of a destiny that she so strongly desired? Henrik, you were a true visionary!!!" Do you agree?

Another student believes that Hedda is misunderstood.

"Au contraire my friends, Hedda was not bored, but trapped. A woman before her time, as most of Ibsen's female characters were, unable to yield to the societal norms of the day. A strong, well-educated woman existing in a time when permission to go out and about had to be asked of the dominant male of the house. The resurgence of the Industrial Revolution was taking place, the world was changing quickly, and with it old manners and chivalry was being made extinct. These mores which Hedda had been raised to cling to were falling away for the world, but not for Hedda. They ran deep in her blood. Despite an inner strength of character and longing to dominate, inspire, and influence, she found herself torn between the new world

and the way in which she was raised. These values and their presence is signified by the silent character of her father, in the form of a portrait that is continually referred to. When Hedda is overshadowed by Mrs. Elvstead in Lovborg's life, she scrambles to make her mark, to have some influence. The nature of that inspiration is of no interest to her. As a madman who longs for fame and finds it in a violent act, Hedda does what she does for the power/influence in it, but not out of malice. Though we, the audience, may judge what her actions may have lead to, this is an unnecessary perspective to adopt. It is "why" she does what she does that makes her such an intriguing character." Discuss this student's perspective.

2. Find a copy of the famous painting "*The Scream*" by Edvard Munch which was painted in Christiania in 1893. Discuss the context of this visual text and Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* which was performed and published three years earlier. See also Vilhelm Hammershoi's painting, *Interior, Frederiksberg Alle* reproduced in the center pages of our theatre program.

ENGLISH POST PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

WRITING TASKS

1. *Hedda Gabler* also suits a unit of study of **Inner Journeys**.

CONTENT

- Close study of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and its context.
- Analysis of the values embedded in the text- those of Christian humanism, capitalism and the changing economic paradigms of the nineteenth century.
- Critical evaluation of the influence of *Hedda Gabler* at its time of composition and why it was valued.
- Critical evaluation of why *Hedda Gabler* is still valued in the present day.
- Read against values to an alternative lifestyle, reflecting the breakdown of traditional family and other structures.
- Critical evaluation and analysis of the values represented in the film version, starring Glenda Jackson.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

- Close reading and viewing of play
- Critical viewing of related film
- Discussion and evaluation of adaptation
- Research into the contexts of both texts
- Written analysis of the values in each text
- Comparison and representation of the differences in values between the texts
- Group presentations on the shaping of meaning by the film's media of production
- Critical reading and evaluation of articles relating to the cultural significance of both texts.
- Extended imaginative and critical composition.

ASSESSMENT: Critical essay on the values of *Hedda Gabler*.

CHARACTER TASKS

1. Write a script for the scene where Hedda might explain to Lovborg why she has burnt his manuscript.
2. Re-read the speeches from the play at the end of these Teachers' Notes. (Section 11).
3. Cate Blanchett recently said "We're living in such conservative times. Anyone who is prepared to commit a passionate act for something they believe in is considered a fool. So for me [Hedda] has enormous resonance.... Hedda is very complicated role, so I can see how people would want to play it. I think she's mythological. She is life." The actor also believes the play, written in 1890, is particularly relevant today. Why is Hedda almost the pinnacle part in the dramatic canon for female actors? How would you research the role if you were playing her?

FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

- a. Using these scenes and other background resources from these

Teachers' Notes, discuss the men in Hedda's life.

b. Compare the way the language in each act reflects the mood of the scenes.

c. In what ways do these speeches reinforce the key representations of the play?

d. Do you think Ibsen's language reflects what happens in real life, especially regarding over-riding, staccato dialogue etc? What is the effect of the many unfinished sentences in the play? How? (See the exchange between Hedda and Thea in the Thea Character Notes in Section 6)

e. Explain the significance of the focus on Hedda Gabler in the title of the play. Why isn't it called Hedda *Tesman*? Here's a relevant scene from Act Two, pp. 47-48:

Ejlert: Hedda. Gabler. Hedda. Gabl -

Hedda: Yes. That was the name I went by. Then.

Ejlert: What ... I have to give that up as well? (*as well as drinking*)

Hedda: Yes. For your health.

Ejlert: Hedda. Tesman (*Simultaneous*) Is it?

Hedda: (*Simultaneous*) That's it?

Ejlert: Oh Hedda, Hedda. How could you throw yourself away –

Also discuss Andrew Upton's use of the (*Simultaneous*) stage direction. What does he intend the actors to do here?

3. Write some short scenes that illustrate power relationships (e.g. Hedda/Tesman, Hedda/Brack, Hedda/Lovborg, Hedda/Aunt Julle or Berthe etc.)

4. Students compare and contrast society and the individual – or the Inner Journey - in two texts of their own choosing as supplementary material.

5. Research the hierarchical status of Norway in the 1890s which is part of the context of the play. (See Section 4 of these Teachers' Notes as a starter.)

6. Try a Reader's Response reading of Ibsen's play.

7. One student has read *Hedda Gabler* as follows: "Hedda Gabler was a boring conniving woman. She married George Tesman only because she was getting older and she needed to be with someone of a decent status. Hedda and George are not a perfect match. Hedda prefers to live in a world of murder and mystery while George likes to research, read, and write books. Hedda obviously finds this boring since she grew up as a militant tomboyish girl. Her boredom leads her to corrupt the lives of others like Lovborg and Mrs. Elvsted. She certainly would have preferred to be with Lovborg, but his status would not allow her. Therefore, she finds a way to make Lovborg's life a living hell by persuading him to kill himself after he feels guilty of losing the only thing that gives him and Mrs. Elvsted life and hope. The only person in the play that gives Hedda a sense of entertainment is Judge Brack. Like Hedda, Judge Brack also wants to see some drama, therefore he stays close to Hedda because he knows that she is capable of doing something malicious. While doing so, he blackmails her into being his slave for life.

I think Hedda Gabler is someone that people can relate to in the new millennium. She is one of those characters that people can see on television or right next door in their neighborhood. I think when Ibsen wrote this play he had a futuristic vision." What is your response to this reading?

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY - FILMOGRAPHY - WEB SITES - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TEXT: *Hedda Gabler* – Andrew Upton's version is hermetic to a certain extent, and follows its own pattern. It is a very accomplished piece of work. His proscriptive punctuation works wonderfully when faithfully followed.

SOURCES:

The primary resource for this production has been Christopher Innes' excellent **Literary Sourcebook on *Hedda Gabler***, Routledge, London, 2003.

See also Meyer's biography of Ibsen and Rolf Fjelde's Foreword to the signet Classic version of *Ibsen – Four Major Plays Volume 1*, a division of Penguin Books, New York 1992.

STC Artstic Associate Tom Wright has also used Marit Andersen's transliteration and Norwegian version of *Hedda Gabler*. Wright says, "The linguistic elegance of Ibsen is apparent and his concision is remarkable. Also, the flintiness of the play in Norwegian is notable." This text has helped the adaptor, director and dramaturg a great deal at key moments in the rehearsal process.

Wright also illuminates other aspects of the text: "In terms of issues that have needed dramaturgical extrapolation, the two most prominent have been the subject of Ejlert Lovborg's magnum opus and the romantic sensibilities that lie behind Hedda's exhortation to Lovborg to die the beautiful death. I have been providing the (rehearsal) room with Goethe's last few pages of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and with a few brief notes on Suicide as a nineteenth century phenomenon.

Another name that has been evoked has been Giambattista Vico. Lovborg's book is a sort of late nineteenth century historiography that abandons chronological listing in favour of a more holistic understanding of the past. I thought Vico the exemplar and source in this case and we have all been reading a little bit of *The New Science* (1725) to get a feel of where Lovborg's thoughts might lie."

SOME OTHER PLAYS BY HENRIK IBSEN

Henrik Ibsen, *Four Major Plays Vol. 1* (translated with a Foreword by Rolf Fjelde), Signet Classic, New York, 1992

Henrik Ibsen, *A Doll's House and Other Plays* (introduction by Peter Watts, 1965), Penguin Classics, Middlesex England, 1982

Henrik Ibsen, *Hedda Gabler and Other Plays* (introduction by Una Ellis-Fermor, 1950), Penguin Classics, Middlesex England, 1973

Henrik Ibsen, *The Master Builder and Other Plays* (introduction by Una Ellis-Fermor, 1958), Penguin Classics, Middlesex England, 1973

Henrik Ibsen, *Ghosts and Other Plays* (introduction by Peter Watts, 1964), Penguin Classics, Middlesex England, 1973

Henrik Ibsen, *John Gabriel Borkman* (introduction by Inga-Stina Ewbank), The Athlone Press, University of London, 1975

See Ibsen's Notes on *Hedda Gabler* and his inspiration for the play in the theatre program for this STC production, edited by Laura Scrivano for more details.

CONTEXT

Susan Faludi, Foreword to Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, adapted by Jon Robin Baitz with a contribution by Anne-Charlotte Hanes Harvey, Grove Press New York 2001

James McFarlane (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, Cambridge UP 1998 - critical essays offering analysis, positioning Ibsen's plays in the context of critical thought. See especially "The middle plays" by Janet Garton, "Ibsen and the realistic problem drama" by Bjorn Hemmer, "Ibsen and the theatre 1877-1900" by Simon Williams and "Ibsen and the twentieth-century stage" by Frederick J. Marker & Lise-Lone Marker.

HSC Drama students studying Meyerhold may find it useful to research the innovative Russian director/theorist's production of *Hedda Gabler*. Reference: Frederick J. Marker & Lise-Lone Marker, "Ibsen and the twentieth-century stage" in James McFarlane (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*, Cambridge UP 1998

Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright, *Changing Stages - A View of British Theatre in the Twentieth Century*, Bloomsbury London 2000

W.B. Worthen, *The Harcourt Brace Anthology of Drama - 3rd edition*, Harcourt Brace College Publishers, Fort Worth 2000, pp. 667-669

Milly S. Barranger, *Theatre - A Way of Seeing*, Fourth Edition, Wadsworth Publishing California 1995

Oscar G. Brockett & Franklin J. Hildy, *History of the Theatre* Allyn & Bacon, 1999

FILMOGRAPHY

Reference: John Walker (ed.), *Halliwel's Film Guide*, Harper Collins, London 2003.

There is a 1975 film of *Hedda* directed by Trevor Nunn from his Royal Shakespeare Company production, but it is almost impossible to find in video stores. Watch for a listing on late night ABC Television, with **Glenda Jackson** as Hedda.

WEB SITES

www.pinkmonkey.com/booknotes/monkeynotes/pmHeddaGabler - downloadable notes on *Hedda Gabler*

www.sydneytheatre.com.au - Sydney Theatre. Visit STC online to subscribe or book single tickets. Take a virtual tour of The Wharf, receive the latest news and special ticket offers or delve into the Company's photo archive.

Our STC web site also includes information about the new theatre at Walsh Bay – Sydney Theatre.

You can also send us your feedback on the productions you have seen, e-mail our archivist for specific information you may be searching for or check the date and time of a performance.

<http://us.imdb.com/Lookup> - helps you choose hundreds of plot,

theme, character and setting options to what you're currently reading or researching; e.g. summaries of plotlines.

www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/schopenhauer.html - a helpful guide to the present day philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer, whose beliefs inform our context and hence this STC production. Also research the beliefs of Nietzsche, Bergson, Lamarck and Comte.

www.bibliomania.com - Bibliomania offers an extensive range of free-to-read, full-text classic literature such as Ibsen, Wilde, Shaw, Shakespeare etc. In the Research Department, you'll find the Bible and the Koran, while the non-fiction texts include Marx's *Das Kapital*. Biographies are free to read, as are the dictionaries and thesauruses.

<http://encarta.msn.com> - Encarta Encyclopedia Article on Ibsen.

www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au - Here you'll find full information about subject syllabi and past examination papers.

hsc.csu.edu.au/english/courses - NSW HSC On-Line 3-Unit English Course - Tutorials, Exams, Resources see also for Drama and Design and Technology resources

<http://www.allreaders.com> - helps you choose hundreds of plot, theme, character and setting options to what you're currently reading or researching.

www.theatrecrafts.com/glossary.html - This website produced by Theatre Crafts includes a list of over 1,250 definitions. The material is listed under Directing, Lighting, Sound, Stage Management, Costume, Stage Design, Rigging, Theatre Building, Theatre Jobs, Administration and Forms of Theatre. A useful website for any teacher or student who wants to develop detailed knowledge of theatre terms.

www.teachlit.co.uk - The new version of this popular website includes over 2,000 pages of English, Drama and Media teaching resources, the online lessons and web links.

www.in2Edu.com - free educational resources, lesson plans, integrated themes and units, free downloads and software, teaching ideas and education links.

www.doollee.com - The definitive guide to Modern Playwrights & Plays

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10. REVIEWS OF THE STC PRODUCTION OF *HEDDA GABLER*

CRITICAL RESPONSES AND ARTICLES

Now read some of the publicity articles and reviews of Robyn Nevin's production of *Hedda Gabler* and jot down in 2 columns points you agree/ disagree with. Give reasons for your choices.

Bryce Hallett, "Blanchett shines as troubled Hedda" review in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Thursday 29 July, 2004

John McCallum, "Blanchett embodies Hedda to the bitter end" review in *The Australian*, Thursday, 29 July 2004

Colin Rose, "Smitten by Blanchett's siren call" review in *The Sun-Herald*, Sunday 1 August 2004

Michael Bodey, "Reaching the heights of great expectation" – short review in *Confidential* in *The Daily Telegraph*, Wednesday 28 July 2004

Jane Albert, "Cate cuts to chaise with dark stage role" - article on actor Cate Blanchett in *The Australian* Monday 26 July 2004

May-Brit Akerholt, "The champion of contradiction" Article on Ibsen in *Arts* in *The Australian*, Monday 26 July, 2004

Diana Simmonds, "Hugo cast as gent in period role" - short profile of actor Hugo Weaving - in *Arts* in *The Sunday Telegraph*, Sunday 25 July 2004

Writing a review: Read some of the reviews from the Sydney season of *Hedda Gabler* reproduced in this kit: note how the reviewer describes the elements of the production and analyses the connections between these elements. Try to be as objective as possible.

Include: Directorial decisions
 Acting techniques used by the actors
 Design choices

Identify the type of publication each is written for.

Discuss the target audience of each one with reference to language

and purpose.

How do each of the writers respond to the play and this particular production?

Overall strengths and weaknesses of the production.

REVIEWING

A guideline for reviewing productions, possibly for a log book in Drama or as a journal entry in English.

If you attend a play, film, concert, opera, musical, school production etc. - write about it critically.

1. Did you enjoy it? Why?
2. What was good or effective? What was bad or didn't communicate with you?
3. How is a good production, and this one in particular, achieved?
4. Did the rest of the audience enjoy it?
5. Was the plot communicated clearly?
6. Was the acting good? (What is good acting?)
7. Set and costumes: Credible? Bad or good? Too much or too little? If the set and costumes play too much of a part in the drama, this is considered an imposing or negative thing.
8. Was the play convincing, dull. Funny in places, too dark? Why? Why not?
9. Was the script/play credible?

11. SCENES FROM HEDDA GABLER: Read the following scenes with a view towards presenting a well-rehearsed staged reading of them.

Hedda Gabler **Adapted by Andrew Upton**

Act One page 5 – 10

Julle: Look at you. Was it a good honeymoon?

Jorgen: Brilliant. I've just been unpacking that suitcase, it was full of books. Rare primary sources. And there are two others I haven't unpacked yet. And that's aside from all the libraries we visited. I got so much of the groundwork done for my next treatise. It was a brilliant. Brilliantly productive time.

Aunt? I have to say. I have this feeling as if I'm right at the peak of my powers.

Julle: You're a gifted man in his thirties.

Jorgen: Perhaps that's it. It's a blessed feeling either way.

You've still got your hat on. Here.

He begins to unfasten the bow and take out the pins. Aunt Julle enjoys the attention. This is something they've shared over the years.

Julle: We missed you, dear little boy.

Jorgen: I missed you. How is Auntie Rina?

Julle: Much the same. Yes, the Good Lord sees fit to keep her among us and I have to say it's a blessing for me, with you gone? I don't know what else I'd do.

Jorgen: This is a lovely thing. Rather expensive by the looks?

Julle: Well, it was really. I thought ... for taking walks with Hedda.

Jorgen: Taking walks with Hedda, are we?

Julle: It seemed. She always looks so lovely.

Jorgen: Will I ever understand you women? And this strange obsession with appearances.

He puts the hat on the piano. Then leads his Aunt over to the chairs.

Let's talk. There's such a lot to tell you.

They sit. Silence.

Julle: My dear, dear little boy. So grown up and a doctor now. I'm glad to have you home my dear, blessed brother's only ...

Jorgen: And for me. To be back. I realised, being away, you have been everything to me. Father, mother, best friend.

Julle: Oh, but our Doctor has a wife, now. Hedda Gabler. The most admired ...

Jorgen: I have to say, I do sometimes wonder. Everyone must really envy me. I lie in bed sometimes thinking. You know.

Julle: Yes. It seems everyone else from your student days really has fallen by the wayside. Particularly that arrogant buck. He fell furthest didn't he? The gutter for him. Poor lost soul. But all the Dean's thought he was the one remember? The great shining. One.

Well. We knew all along it was our dear boy.

Jorgen: Have you heard anything of him?

Julle: Who?

Jorgen: Lovborg?

Julle: Lord, no.

There's some new book. The Judge mentioned.

Jorgen: Really? What? How ... I mean. How did he manage to?

Julle: It couldn't be anything important. The state of him.

Perhaps it's a history of taverns and bordellos –

Jorgen: Auntie. Really. We mustn't be too –

Julle: When will you publish?

Jorgen: Soon. I'm in the thick of the research. And all this new material I've collected needs to be arranged. It's very important. I have town counsellor's reports. Some of them unopened for the last two or three hundred years.

But I will be writing soon. I have a brilliant sense of it.

Julle: Still concentrating on the middle ages?

Jorgen: Absolutely. It's my field. I'm making Brabant Domestic Crafts my speciality. No-one's dealing with this stuff. I'll be the authority. Not just in Europe, Auntie the world. Thing is? The universities in America are wild about anything to do with Europe.

Julle: Your father would be proud. An authority?

Jorgen: Guaranteed.

Julle: And with this lovely home and wife? No wonder you feel so.

Jorgen: These are my days. Auntie. This is my time.

She smiles indulgently.

Julle: And that's just the beginning.

Jorgen: Gosh.

Silence.

Julle: Anything else? In all (Simultaneous) that time?

Jorgen: (Simultaneous) Well, I'm telling you what's been happening. Nothing I haven't mentioned.

Julle: After five or six months of Honeymooning. With. Such a wife.

Jorgen: You're worried about the trunks.

Julle: No.

Jorgen: She had a lovely time, yes - but I made sure I did a lot of field work. Invaluable field work. So it wasn't just ...

Julle: Of course your work. But no ... Prospects? Little ...

Jorgen: Well, I told you about the Doctorate.

Julle: Yes the Doctorate.

Jorgen: I have other ambitions, of course. You know that. But I was pretty impressed with the Doctorate I thought you'd be –

Julle: Of course. Dear boy of course.

Jorgen: I have other prospects, yes.

Julle: Well?

Jorgen: We aren't supposed to. It's early days Auntie. Early days.

Julle: But your dear Aunt. Really Jorgen, you'd tell your mother. Your best friend?

Jorgen: Well, I think ... I mean, I think we can safely say that I'll be professor before this Academic year starts. You know, I think we can hope for that. The position needs to be filled. But ... And I will publish soon.

But really. You know. Aunty.

Silence.

Jorgen: I will.

Julle: It was a lot of cases. You didn't leave with so many. But then it seems so long ago. Were you alright for money Jorgen? Dear little boy?

Jorgen: We had the fellowship.

Julle: And that did for two?

Jorgen: I was very aware of the money. And frugal -

Julle: But travelling with such a lady? And a carriage for the bags in every town? It's the little things.

Jorgen: Yes.

But it had to be Auntie. For Hedda. It had to be.

Julle: Of course.

Have you had a good look round the house?

Jorgen: I've been unpacking my notes and books in the back rooms since dawn.

Julle: The back rooms?

Jorgen: Yes, the little rooms. I think they'll be perfect for my books and notes. We can't have them in the library.

Julle: But the back rooms?

Jorgen: What used to be the Nursery.

Some of these older editions are too delicate to be handled by any old body...

Don't you think?

Julle: It's a lovely big house. I suppose.

Jorgen: Isn't it.

Julle: I imagine Hedda's thrilled.

Jorgen: It's her dream home.

Julle: No doubt.

Jorgen: Literally. She said to me, when I proposed, she couldn't live anywhere else. I have to say, I was terrified when it came up for sale.

Well we managed it. And I feel. This is part of how I feel things are so. Wonderful just now.

Julle: That's right. But.

Jorgen: Dear Aunt, how lovely to talk.

Julle: Now Jorgen, I do want to say.

You must be careful. With the expense. The bills don't stop, you have to keep a household like this running.

Jorgen: I know. I know. Absolutely. There's all sorts of costs. I do know that.

What would you think a house like this would be. To run?

Julle: I couldn't say. But it would be. More than perhaps you might imagine.

Jorgen: We'll know soon enough, of course. But I would think.

He has no idea.

Thank heavens for Judge Brack is all I can say. He organised brilliant terms for us on the loan. Hedda and he managed it all.

Julle: I know.

She didn't mention, your Aunt Rina and I helped with the furnishings?

Jorgen: The furnishings? No. How?

Julle: We took out a mortgage on our annuity.

Jorgen: On your annuity? You ...

Julle: I expect she didn't want you to worry.

Jorgen: But that's all you've got. Are you mad?

Julle: Now please, Jorgen. It's just a formality. Judge Brack was very reassuring when he approached us about it.

Jorgen: No. But we can't –

Julle: Just make sure. You look after everything. Keep it all clean as a pin. Then what's the problem?

Julle is straightening out the couch. Making sure nothing is causing any damage.

That's the really vital part in keeping any house running. Things like (Simultaneous) furniture covers -

Jorgen: (Simultaneous) No. It's really not on. I'll have to.

Julle: It's done, Jorgen. Now. So ...?

And you wouldn't want to deprive your dear, fond Aunts of their only pleasure?

Jorgen: Auntie.

Julle: Dear boy. To help you on your way in the world has been our great purpose and look at you? And to hear how positive you feel about your prospects? It's a thrill in itself and so, it costs us a little a month? Well, well. As long as everything is looked after it's a safe investment. In your future.

Cover the furniture.

Jorgen: Hedda ... Dear Aunt. You know? I won't let you down.

And I can say, from where I stand? I've got to say, things are looking pretty good.

Hedda enters, she's carrying an empty canvas bag.

Julle: And here she is. Dear Hedda.

Hedda: Miss Tesman?

Did you stay last night?

Julle: No.

Hedda: Golly. You must have been up with the dustmen to get here this early.

Julle: I wanted to make sure you'd settled in.

Hedda: We've only just arrived.

Hedda begins pulling all the flowers out of the vases and dumping them into the bag.

Hedda Gabler **Adapted by Andrew Upton**

Act Two pages 32 – 41

Hedda: Let's chat.

Brack joins her. He takes out his cigarettes.

Brack: May I?

Hedda: May I?

He hands her a cigarette and they smoke together.

Well?

Brack: Well?

Hedda: I was first.

Brack: It's lovely to see you.

Hedda: I'm glad to be back.

No. I'm glad the travelling is over.

Brack: Tiring?

Hedda: It's that thing. Just the two of us. All day, everyday. That same other person.

Brack: Morning and night. On tap.

Hedda: That's the contract Brack, isn't it?

Brack: But judging by Tesman's letters you were having a wonderful time.

Hedda: Tesman is a man of learning.

When men of learning say they're having a wonderful time they mean something entirely different to the rest of us.

Brack: But surely, love (Simultaneous) conquers –

Hedda: (Simultaneous) Love? Don't bandy that over-rated word around me.

Love is how people sweeten obligation. It is a lie. And when I wasn't obliged to wait in hotel rooms while he fossicked around in libraries? Then it was my obligation to listen to the history of Brabant and the domestic improvements and blah, blah, blah.

Brack: There are worse obligations.

Hedda: Sickness and Health?

Brack: Richer and Poorer?

Hedda: Till death do us part.

Brack: Aaah. Men?

So? Married life is not for Hedda Gabler?

Hedda: I didn't say that.

It's a surprise that's all. How ... Total it is.

But I was done with Dances and flirtations. My time had come.
(passed even ...)

She is suddenly in the middle of a whole lot of stuff she'd rather ignore.

Anyway.

The judge can see it all. She eyes him warily.

I would have thought Jorgen Tesman was a good catch.

Brack: Certainly.

Hedda: And I haven't come across anything. Odd. (Simultaneous) At all.

Brack: (Simultaneous) God forbid.

Hedda: He's a terribly hard worker.

Brack: Industrious. His Aunts think the (Simultaneous) world of him.

Hedda: (Simultaneous) He has prospects, Brack. Ambition any rate. And I feel his commitment to me sharpens that for him. In that way, we're good for each other. He wants me to live. Properly. And I spur him on. To (greatness). More.

Brack: It's a match made in heaven.

Hedda: It is a match made on earth, and I am not ... pretending otherwise. But it is a match and a damn sight more than my countless admirers ever offered.

Brack: I can't answer for the others but for me – out of my deep respect for the institution of marriage? I avoid it.

Hedda: It's alright for you.

Brack: I make a better friend. A confidante, that is the service I offer.

Hedda: To the man of the house?

Brack: Preferably not. But of course the man in the house must not be alienated. It's a triangular relationship that I find works best.

Hedda: I could have done with someone else. Some days. You know. A friend.

Brack: You're home now.

Hedda: This is merely a stop on the line. The journey continues.

Brack: Step down. Stretch your legs.

Hedda: I would never do that.

Brack: Never?

Hedda: Never. You don't know who might.

Brack: Catch a glimpse of your ankles?

But it's not so bad? A bit of fresh air?

Hedda: No. I remain where I am. Steadfast, if nothing else.

Brack: What if someone? Pops by? Steps in?

Hedda: That could be different.

Brack: It's your compartment. As long as you can trust them.

Hedda: As long as they're lively. Entertaining. Like a cool (Simultaneous) breeze.

Brack: (Simultaneous) And not a whiff of learning.

With a big sigh.

Hedda: Maybe so.

Brack: The triangle is complete.

Hedda: (to herself) All aboard.

Jorgen enters, his suit pocket is bulging with something.

Jorgen: It's so muggy out there. I've sweated through my coat. Look Hedda.

In her desire to avoid that wifely intimacy she makes it clear they have visitors.

Judge? I'd no idea. Berte didn't say.

Hedda: He snuck in.

Brack: The back way.

Hedda: Like a common criminal.

Jorgen: Hedda.

Can I offer you anything, Judge?

Brack: Your wife has been a charm.

Hedda: What's in your pocket?

Brack: More learned publications? A good academic must keep up.

Jorgen: Well yes, too right. But no.

He's wrestling with it. It's really stuffed in there. He takes off his coat to get more purchase – the sweat is thick under his arms and down his shirt back.

It's Lovborg's book. I couldn't put it down. Now I can't (get it out)

The coat pocket tears. He has the book.

It's.

I really think it's very well argued and.

So. Interesting.

As you say, Judge. The man can write.

Have you read any of Lovborg's work, Hedda?

Hedda: No.

Jorgen: You should have a try of this. It is in some way ... simpler than his earlier work. More ...

Hedda: Populist?

Brack: It's certainly sold well.

Jorgen: I bet.

We're not due to go yet are we?

Brack: No. Plenty of time.

Jorgen: I really should try and bathe today. Before you're big party.

Brack: I think so.

Jorgen: I won't be long.

Brack: No hurry.

He makes to go. Stops.

Jorgen: Hedda, while I think of it. Aunt Julle won't be over tonight.

Hedda: I did offend her.

Jorgen: Aunt Julle? No. She's got more to worry about than silly hats. Aunty Rina is sick.

Hedda: Isn't she always?

Jorgen: She's particularly bad today, poor thing.

Hedda: So be it.

Jorgen: She did want me to say though, how lovely you look with a bit of weight on.

Hedda: Did she?

He is gone. Brack is intrigued.

Brack: You offended Julle?

Hedda: No.

Apparently not.

Brack is looking at her. Has she put on weight?

What?

Brack: Do tell.

Hedda: She left her new hat on the piano. I pretended I thought it was the maid's.

Brack: Now, why would you want to do that to a harmless old lady?

Hedda: I don't know. Something comes over me. I get this urge. And I just. Have to.

I can't explain it. I can't, even to myself.

Brack: You're unhappy.

Hedda: Yes. But. No. Why would I expect to be happy in the first place?

Brack: You have a lovely house. Your dream house (simultaneous) the only –

Hedda: (simultaneous) You don't believe that. Do you?

Brack: That's what Tesman said.

What? Is this his idea?

Hedda: Last summer. He was always following me home after ... Various outings.

Brack: I heard. Unfortunately I was elsewhere, last summer.

Hedda: By all accounts, Judge, you were every where last summer.

Brack: Tut tut tut, Miss.

Hedda: Well?

Brack: It's your summer we're talking about.

Hedda: God. There's nothing to tell.

Imagine them. These uncomfortable late summer evening walks home. Which I couldn't get out of. He's tenacious, my husband ... So? We always ended up by here. I felt sorry for him. Twisting his hat in his sticky hands. Desperate for something to talk about.

I said that I thought this was the most beautiful house in town.

It just popped out. Sadly? It turns out, he'd actually thought that, all his life. Well, every time we passed it? It became this one thing

we had in common. Soon enough we were standing at the gates for what felt like ages at a time. Just talk I thought, but for Tesman they were plans. It was the only place I could possibly live. Before I knew it, it was like I was some Princess locked in his fairy tale. Then, he was proposing and offering me the house, the honeymoon. The world.

Ready made.

Brack: So did you like the house at all?

Hedda: No. Oh. It's fine but. No. And I hate the neighbourhood.

Brack: What about on the inside? Now it's yours.

Hedda: The furniture's good, of course. But there's a smell. I just hope it's some concoction of his witch Aunt's.

Brack: Sorry to disappoint you. I ate here a few times with the Falks. This house is an olfactory monument to the late Mrs. F.

Hedda: Dear.

It's that dead smell. Bitter rot. Like flowers on the turn.

Christ, I'm going to go mad here.

Brack: You know ...? You need. Something – A hobby?

(Simultaneous) Something to keep you ...

She laughs a hard, scornful laugh simultaneously with his clarification.

Hedda: The Judge has passed sentence.

Brack: Well what do you propose?

To let yourself. Go. To ... ? What?

Purpose, Hedda. Or life soon becomes a chore.

Hedda: I had thought. But it's probably silly.

Brack: Try me?

Hedda: I had wondered. If I could get Tesman into politics.

Brack: Politics? Tesman? In Brabant, four hundred years ago, maybe.

Hedda: He'd be very good at it. He's very manipulative.

Brack: But what would he stand for? Who would vote for him? It's. Not his world. No, what possible satisfaction ...? (Simultaneous) Hedda?

Hedda: (Simultaneous) I get so bored and my mind. Wanders.

So you don't think Tesman could be the Prime Minister?

Brack: Hedda ...?

Apart from every other consideration. Every. Single. Other consideration. To be a politician? You need to have a lot of money behind you ... which.

Hedda stands and moves around the room.

Hedda: Well that'll be it. It's always going to be that. Isn't it? These ... Shabby. Shabby. Circumstances. I've ended up in.

That's what makes you think my hopes are ludicrous. Money (simultaneous) That's what it is.

Brack: (Simultaneous) No ...

Quiet.

You know? It's something else ... (her problem, her unhappiness)

With you?

The world has never said 'No' (simultaneous) to you.

Hedda: (Simultaneous) Here we go.

What would you know?

Brack: You've never had to fight for anything.

Hedda: A bit of adversity is it? (Simultaneous) As my hobby?

Brack: (Simultaneous) Something important to you.

Hedda: You don't know that.

Brack: But it might be. Yes. Soon.

Hedda: What? My husband's squabble over his precious posting? I couldn't (Simultaneous) give a damn.

Brack: (Simultaneous) No, no not that. No, something much more important to you. A claim on you. Responsibilities for Miss Hedda (simultaneous) herself.

Hedda: (Simultaneous) That.

Is not happening.

Brack: We'll see what you're saying in six months time.

Hedda: I have no. That is not for me. Claims and responsibilities. No, no, no. That's not my calling.

Brack: Every woman hears that call.

Hedda: Be quiet. I said. You have no idea what I hear. The only thing I hear? My calling?

The sound of my own endless voice droning on till the end. Boring and boring the life out of me. That is what I hear. All day.

She breaks away from him, laughing.

Oh look? Here comes the third leg in your preposterous triangle.

Hedda Gabler **Adapted by Andrew Upton**

Pages 49 – 59

Ejlert: Are you going to answer me? Hedda?

Hedda: I'm going to stop talking to you altogether if you don't address me properly.

Ejlert: So I can't call you Hedda now?

Hedda: No.

You can think it. But you mustn't say it.

Ejlert: I see. Out of respect for your love of (Simultaneous) Jorgen Tesman?

Hedda: (simultaneous) Love?

She laughs a hard, mirthless laugh.

Don't be ridiculous.

Ejlert: So you don't love him?

Hedda: I will not be unfaithful. That's.

Ejlert: Hedda? Tell me one thing –

Hedda silences him as Tesman appears with the tray.

Jorgen: Here comes the fun.

Hedda: Waited on hand and foot.

Jorgen: Of course.

Hedda: But there are two glasses of Punch? Mr. Lovborg (doesn't) –

Jorgen: The other is for Mrs. Elvsted.

Had you forgotten she was coming?

Hedda: I'm lost in fond memories. Remember this little village?

Jorgen: Oh yes. That was a night –

Hedda: We met the most. Enthusiastic young German couple.

Jorgen: You should have been there, Ejlert.

They laugh together. Hedda turns the page. Jorgen nods quickly to Ejlert and then is gone through the French Doors to join Brack for a cigarette.

Ejlert: I need you to answer me one thing, Hedda.

Hedda: Still?

Ejlert: Were things ... ridiculous between us?

Hedda: Between us? No. No that was. Would you say we were ... Comrades? (Simultaneous) Intimate friends.

Ejlert: (Simultaneous) More than that. Soul mates. We said.

Hedda: You were so. Bold.

Ejlert: How could I be any less?

Hedda: There was something. Fine and tantalising. But also Brave and ... wild. About our secret world. How no-one. Knew?

Ejlert: Remember the General, your father, sat by the window. Oblivious?

Hedda: And us snuggled into the sofa?

Ejlert: Pretending to read that magazine. Always that same issue.

Their situation is alive again.

Hedda: Now it's snapshots.

Ejlert: I could tell you anything Hedda. My hopes, my fears. My fantasies, my demons. That thing inside me that raged and blazed with. Drink. Those long, lost weekends or stretches of time when I ... And you could. You wouldn't judge, (Simultaneous) you were –

Hedda: (Simultaneous) Judge what? It was fantastic. To me.

Ejlert: There was a power in you. Between us. That allowed ...

Hedda: A power in me?

Ejlert: Yes. I don't know how else to. Explain. The connection between us. My soul. And yours.

Those roundabout questions you asked.

Hedda: Which you completely understood.

Ejlert: So forward.

Hedda: In a roundabout way.

Ejlert: In your mind. Forward. In your heart. And mind.

You seemed so ... accepting of the world and it's dark corners. That you could ask... Conceive of. Such questions, Hedda Gabler?

Hedda: That you could answer them. Ejlert Lovborg.

Ejlert: So.

There.

We were not ridiculous. And at the bottom of all that? Between us? There was love. That is love and I know it, because I would leave here. Or your father's house, I should say.

I would leave. Clean. As if I'd made some confession. Some peace. With the world.

That must be love.

Hedda: Or infatuation.

Think of the situation. A young girl. Who knows nothing of the world but what she can guess at. In secret discussions about ...

Ejlert: What?

Hedda: To catch a glimpse of something so ...

Ejlert: So ...?

Hedda: Something you weren't to know about.

Ejlert: A young girl's infatuation?

(Simultaneous) That's all.

Hedda: (Simultaneous) That's.

That. As well. Almost.

Ejlert: Almost love. Stopped from becoming.

Hedda: That. Is your fault.

Ejlert: You. Broke.

Hedda: Probably to avoid reality crashing in on our little world. And how could you have -?

Is that how you treat a soul mate?

Ejlert: You know my soul.

Why didn't you just shoot me?

Hedda: It's not. Any. Way. People would have nattered and had their stupid little. Tut-tutting. No.

Scandal.

Ejlert: You're a coward?

Hedda: When it comes to that? Probably.

Lucky for you I'd say. And now you get to console yourself with the magistrate's wife. (simultaneous) How delightful.

Ejlert: (Simultaneous) So Thea has told you?

Hedda: Have you told her. About us?

Ejlert: No. She would never understand.

Hedda: Tut. Tut?

Ejlert: Yes. Too stupid.

Hedda: Stupid?

Ejlert: In that way. To understand. The darker side of. Me. People.

Hedda: And I am too afraid.

I have to tell you.

Ejlert: Yes?

Hedda: That. I didn't pull the trigger?

Was not my deepest cowardice that evening.

Ejlert: Oh Hedda. Hedda Gabler.

Down the hallway, Berte can be heard, greeting Thea.

There is love here.

He would touch her heart. She snaps the album shut and stands.

Hedda: Watch. What you believe

And Thea is here. Dearest Thea.

Thea Elvsted enters.

Come in. We're having a lovely natter.

Thea: Should I, greet your husband. Quickly?

Hedda: No, leave them out of it.

They're off soon.

Thea: Off? Where?

Hedda: Some kind of a party. For Gentlemen Only.

Thea looks quickly at Ejlert. He shakes his head. Hedda watches the interchange disdainfully. Thea would sit near Ejlert.

Thea sit next to me. I want to be in the middle.

She obeys.

Ejlert: Isn't she lovely?

Hedda is running her hands through Thea's hair.

Hedda: To look at?

Ejlert: And talk to. We can be frank. There is an unconditional belief (simultaneous) in each other.

Hedda: (Simultaneous) Nothing round about?

Ejlert: No need.

Thea: I'm glad we can all be honest. I'm so ... happy to be able to inspire you.

Hedda: You inspire him?

Ejlert: A lot of it is her courage.

Thea: Oh God. (Simultaneous) Me? Courage?

Ejlert: (Simultaneous) When it concerns. A comrade. Your comrade. Yes.

Hedda: Courage? Yes. Yes. If one only had. That.

Ejlert: What? Then?

Hedda: Then life might be very different.

Speaking of courage. Thea would you like a little punch?

Thea: No. Thanks. I don't.

Hedda: Mr. Lovborg?

Ejlert: I won't.

Hedda: Of course.

But even if I wanted (simultaneous) you to. For old –

Ejlert: (Simultaneous) It wouldn't make any difference.

Hedda: But we've never taken. Drink together.

Ejlert: Rightly so.

Hedda: Oh. I thought your mind was more ... (forward). Obviously (Simultaneous) not.

Thea: (Simultaneous) Hedda. Really.

Hedda: But actually you know? It'd do you good.

Ejlert: How so?

Hedda: Rather, it would do you good in the eyes of other people.

Ejlert: Really?

Hedda: It's about strength and courage isn't it? People worry that the tea-total lives in fear, is an accident waiting to happen.

Thea: Hedda. That's (simultaneous) not fair.

Ejlert: (Simultaneous) I don't care what people think.

Hedda: They balk at the weakness such strength of purpose is designed to hide.

Ejlert: Do (Simultaneous 1) they?

Thea: (Simultaneous 1) No they don't. (Simultaneous 2) Hedda?

Ejlert: (Simultaneous 2) Shut up. Thea. Please.

Silence.

Hedda: I worry about it. The look of contempt on a friend - Judge Brack's face. When you didn't dare to join them for a toast.

Ejlert: I had more important (Simultaneous) things to (talk about) ...

Hedda: (Simultaneous) And then the look of. Pity. I would say. Pity, when you shoved your tail between your legs at the idea of joining his soiree. Like a little doggy.

Ejlert: Is that what you think?

Hedda: It's what I think Judge Brack thinks. And he's a friend. God knows what other people think.

But I suppose it doesn't matter what people think.

Ejlert: It can't.

Hedda: So steadfast.

See Thea? You had no reason to be all in a tizzy this morning. It seems to me your all-new (simultaneous) Ejlert Lovborg has passed the test.

Thea: (Simultaneous) Hedda. Hedda, Hedda.

Ejlert: Your what? What's this?

Hedda: We hadn't seen each other for years and she comes rushing in all a-twitter with anxiety that you'd. Well. But you hadn't. And I knew you were better than that. I tried to say, Thea. But she insisted I see you.

Thea is mortified and verging on tears.

Anyway. It's an ill wind, blows no good. We're all three of us together-

Ejlert: What did you think?

Thea: I didn't Ejlert, I (Simultaneous 1) never did.

Hedda: (Simultaneous 1) Careful Thea. Judge Brack (Simultaneous 2) is watching you.

Ejlert: (Simultaneous 2) What did you (Simultaneous 3) think?

Thea: (Simultaneous 3) No Ejlert I didn't. Please. (Simultaneous 4) Hedda, Ejlert Please. Hedda.

Hedda: (Simultaneous 4) What are you doing? He's watching you can't you see (Simultaneous 5) He's watching you. Thea. Please. What are you? Thea. Now. Really.

Ejlert: (Simultaneous 5) What did you think?

Thea: (Simultaneous 5) Oh Ejlert. No. Please don't. No Hedda please stop him. Ejlert No, anything, anything, anything.

Ejlert: This? *He grabs the punch and downs it in one.* This? You stupid.

Thea is wracked. He takes up the other.

Hedda: That was (mine) – *He drinks it.* Never mind. Cheers.

The men poke their heads in from the garden.

Thea: What have you (Simultaneous 1) done?

Hedda: (simultaneous 1) Pull yourself (Simultaneous 2) together.

Ejlert: (Simultaneous 2) The whole thing's a sham. You're a sham.

Hedda: Mr. Lovborg. Please.

Ejlert: Please what? Mrs Tesman?

Hedda: Anyone'd think it mattered. It doesn't matter.

Have a drink. Don't be so pompous. You never were. Pompous.

Brack and Jorgen are inside from little chat, intrigued by the sudden energy in the room.

Brack: We have to be moving on.

Hedda: I think so. I think we all. Could.

Ejlert: I might join you –

Brack: Please do.

Jorgen: Yes, yes.

Thea would stand and drag Ejlert down to her but Hedda stops her and holding her arm tight, pinching the flesh.

Hedda: (Between her and Thea) Don't you.

Thea is white with pain. Hedda is still pinching.

Jorgen: Bring your manuscript.

Ejlert: I will.

Brack: This promises to be. Oodles of fun.

The men are doing their overcoats and parting things. Hedda lets Thea go.

Jorgen: I just thought. Thea – Mrs Elvsted ... how will we get you home?

Hedda: We'll think of something.

Ejlert: I'll come back. I won't stay long. I don't need to. I just ...

Would that suit you Mrs. Tesman? (Simultaneous) Ten?

Hedda: (Simultaneous) Certainly. Anytime.

Thea: I'll wait for you.

Ejlert: Yes. I'll. Soon. Just. Thea ... I just.

Brack: Well gentlemen?

Hedda: I wish I could slip into your pocket Judge Brack?

Brack: Why so?

Hedda: I could listen in on you fellows. In your element. Away from all the politeness. (Simultaneous) Having such fun.

Brack: (Simultaneous) I don't know. I wouldn't advise that dear Mrs Tesman. What do you think Jorgen?

Jorgen: No. Now Hedda? You are mad. The things you come up with.

Silence.

Brack: Well goodnight, ladies.

Ejlert: Around ten.

The men leave. Thea is watching Hedda. Hedda becomes self-conscious.

Hedda: You think to keep him weak? You think that's your answer?

Thea: I don't ... I'm not. Keeping anything. I just –

Hedda: Can't you see? He needs to rise above it. Out of it. From within that cauldron of his head. Hot and high and wonderful. With Vine Leaves in his hair. Not.

Thea: I hope you're right.

Hedda: Doubt him as much as you like. I believe in him. That is how he will be (free).

Thea: I didn't realise you were so. Invested in the situation.

Hedda: It's. A hobby I've taken up. Seeing what it's like to have control over someone's life. You (Simultaneous) seem to enjoy it.

Thea: (Simultaneous) Surely ... you've.

Hedda: Never. Probably not even now.

Thea: What about your husband?

Hedda: No and even if I could what's that? Paltry. But you? What you have? You are so ...

She grabs her passionately.

I might burn that hair off after all.

Thea: Let go of me. Let go of me. Hedda.

She breaks free. Thrilled, Hedda would grab her again but Berte is in the doorway.

Berte: Dinner's –

Hedda hates to be seen, caught like this by Berte. It flusters her.

Hedda: Yes. Alright. We're coming. Go away.

Berte goes. Thea wants to get out of the door. Hedda grabs her.

Dinner?

Thea: No. I would rather. (Simultaneous) I must get home. No.

Hedda: (Simultaneous) No. No. We will talk and have dinner, Stupid. And then at Ten O'clock. Ejlert will return. With vine leaves in his hair.

She is pulling Thea to the dining room.

Blackout.

Hedda Gabler
Adapted by Andrew Upton

Act Four pages 88 - 91

Jorgen: Hedda dearest? Can we set up at your writing desk? My back...

Hedda: Of course. Dear.

Jorgen: Can I clear a bit –

Hedda: No, no don't fuss yourself. I'll do that. Dear.

Hedda hurries over to the drawers with the pistol. She clears things out.

Jorgen: Thea, bring the case over here for now.

Hedda: There we are.

Jorgen: We won't need that much.

Hedda: No I'll put it all in here, on my piano, for now.

Hedda has a pile of things which she moves out into the small room off the back. Thea and Jorgen begin to spread out from the table to the writing table. Hedda returns and stands behind Thea, playing with her hair, lightly.

Hedda: Thea, sweetest. Thea? Do you think it will be achievable? This memorial to. Ejlert?

Thea: We can only hope. There is so much to do.

Jorgen: We can do it. We have to and you know? Collating and arranging papers is something I'm very good at.

Hedda moves across the floor again. Eventually unable to resist Brack's orbit. They are both trying to keep this conversation very much to themselves.

Hedda: Why does it have to be stolen?

Brack: Because any other explanation will cause a lot of trouble, Mrs Tesman.

Hedda: Why so?

Brack: Lovborg was here this morning? Wasn't he?

Hedda: Yes. You haven't answered my question.

Brack: Were you alone with him?

Hedda: Briefly. A little.

Brack: And you left him alone in the room.

Hedda: No.

Brack: Really?

Hedda: Briefly. Perhaps.

Brack: That'll do.

Hedda: Where is it , this pistol? Have you got it?

Brack: It's evidence. The police will keep it.

They'll try to trace it and find out where and how he got it.

Hedda: And will they. Find that out?

Brack: Not from me. Necessarily.

Hedda: And. You still haven't answered my question. Why is it stolen? What if the owner of the pistol. Knew Lovborg had it? What would come of that?

Brack: Then Hedda. The whole town would turn out, again. Talking and staring and queuing up at the gates to your lovely house to get a glimpse of the mysterious other woman in this sordid little triangle.

Hedda: That's (Simultaneous) just you –

Brack: (Simultaneous) And this is before the trial starts. And you would be subpoenaed. And it would be your word versus Miss Diana's in the stand. Did she take the gun from him and shoot him in self-defence? So? Did he go over there – at your insistence – to shoot her? Was it in his clumsy rush the gun went off as he pulled it, stupidly from his pocket? Oh there are countless narratives to natter over. The town will be talking for years.

Hedda: Actually. How am I. Tied up in this repulsive little story suddenly?

Brack: I was with the police this morning. I saw the pistol. If he didn't steal it? He was given it and if he was given it? By who? And. Why?

And what does that make you? An accomplice?

But really. This is all speculation. I'm the only one who knows and I have no reason to tell the police, do I? Hedda?

Hedda: What are you saying?

Brack: And if they trace the gun you can say it was stolen. And I'll keep mum.

Hedda: You were involved this morning. At the outset.

Brack: My alibi held.

Hedda: I can do what I want.

Brack: Of course. Of course. But the law can be sticky.

Hedda: So. I'm. not free to (choose.)

No. I can't stand that. No. Never. I'd rather die.

Brack: Eventually one stops railing against the inevitable, and embraces it.

Hedda: Perhaps. It's time to embrace it.

Hedda moves away from Brack and is over behind her husband who is working away at the pile of notes side by side with Thea.

Hedda: Now? Do we think Tesman? Is it possible?

Jorgen: There's a lot of work to be done.

Hedda: Imagine. But it is. Going to be.

She toys with Thea's hair again.

Is it good, Thea dearest? Sitting by my husband going over all Ejlert's work. After having sat by him whilst he did it? Does it feel? Different?

Thea: I only hope I can inspire your husband as well.

Hedda: In time. In time. Thea, dearest.

Jorgen: I've got to say, just working with the notes. Thea? You have a real sense of what he was striving for and it is pretty inspiring stuff.

Hedda: Is there anything I can do? For either of you?

Jorgen: No, no. I'm sorry to do this to you both but if you don't mind, Judge? Keeping Hedda company while we work?

Brack: It's my pleasure.

Hedda: No need. I'm tired and have a little headache. I might lie down on the sofa, in my room.

She disappears into the back room.

Jorgen: You relax dear.

Jorgen and Thea are engrossed in their work. Suddenly from the back room comes the thumping clatter of a crazy dance being played on the piano.

Thea: (To Jorgen) Oh, can she stop that dreadful racket?

Jorgen: (Calling) Hedda dear? Don't play dances tonight. Think of dear Rina and poor Ejlert.

The music stops. Hedda appears briefly in the doorway.

Hedda: And of your Aunt Julle. And of everybody. I will be quiet from now on.

She disappears again.

Jorgen: Perhaps this melancholy work is getting her down. She really needs. It might be better if in future you move in with my Aunt Julle, Thea.

Thea: No, really.

Jorgen: She's lovely.

Thea: I'm sure she is but –

Jorgen: I insist. We will work from there at nights.

Thea: Do you think?

Jorgen: I do. For Hedda's sake.

Hedda: I can hear you making plans without me Tesman. But what will I do in the evenings?

Jorgen: I'm sure the judge will call by and keep you entertained.

Brack: Happily. We'll have a ball.

Brack is smiling to himself.

Hedda: Oh yes. You'd love that wouldn't you Judge Brack? To be the only Cock in my run?

There is a shot from Hedda's room.

Blackout

Jorgen: Hedda? What have you done?

Thea: What has she done?

Berte: (Running in) Missus? Dear Boy!

Lights Up

Brack: But. People don't ...

Blackout.