



## MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER – NOMINATION FORM

**Norway - Henrik Ibsen: A Doll's House**

### **PART A – ESSENTIAL INFORMATION**

*A Doll's House* has been staged throughout the world, and still is - one and a half century later. Few plays have had a similar impact globally on social norms and conditions. Few play characters world-wide can claim an equivalent importance as role model as Nora Helmer.

More than anyone, Henrik Ibsen gave theatrical art a new vitality by bringing into European bourgeois drama an ethical gravity, a psychological depth, and a social significance which the theatre had lacked since the days of William Shakespeare.

It is from this perspective we view his contribution to theatrical history. His realistic contemporary drama was a continuation of the European tradition of tragic plays. In these works he portrays people from the middle class of his day. These are people whose routines are suddenly upset as they are confronted with a deep crisis in their lives. They have been blindly following a way of life leading to the troubles and are themselves responsible for the crisis. Looking back on their lives, they are forced to confront themselves.

Ever since *A Doll's House* was first published, it has raised debate and controversy, both because of its splendid dramatic structure and because of its broad ideological impact.

Henrik Ibsen's works are performed on stages world-wide, read in numerous translations, studied and researched on every continent of the world. The notes, drafts and papers for Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* belong to the most copious and most interesting manuscript material from the hand of this great playwright.

The first known draft of the play is entitled "Notes on the Tragedy of the Present Age" (Rome, 19 October 1878). When published in 1879, the play revolutionised contemporary Western drama, both formally and thematically. In the twentieth century, the effect of the play spread to include Asia and the Third World, where its form became symbolic of modern Western drama and its content symbolic of values such as human rights and existential freedom.

In the draft material we are given direct access to the playwright's workshop. Here we can follow the development of Ibsen's artistic imagination and the sharpening of ideological content. In the manuscripts, Ibsen expresses his revolutionary ideas more directly and more easily accessible than in the finished work, which for artistic reasons is rendered more ambiguous. The manuscripts include all material known to exist from the creation and first printing of the play.

*A Doll's House* is an exceptional achievement. In spite of Nora's uncertain future prospects - facing the problems a divorced woman without means would face in nineteenth century society - she has served and serves as a symbol throughout the world, for women fighting for liberation and equality.

## 1. IDENTITY AND LOCATION

### 1. Identity and Location

#### 1.1 Name of documentary heritage

Henrik Ibsen's autograph manuscripts of his play *A Doll's House* (Et dukkehjem), 1879

#### 1.2 Country

Norway

#### 1.3 State, province or region

Oslo

#### 1.4 Address

National Library of Norway, Oslo Division  
P.O.Box 2674 Solli  
NO – 0203 Oslo Norway  
<http://www.nb.no/>

#### 1.5 Name of organization or institution (if appropriate)

Same as 1.4

## 2. Legal Information

### 2.1 Owner (name and contact details)

National Library of Norway, Oslo Division (Ministry of Cultural Affairs)  
Director: Mrs. Sissel Nilsen  
P.O.Box 2674 Solli  
N-0203 Oslo  
Norway

**Telephone** +47 23 27 60 60

**Fax** +47 23 27 60 10

### 2.2 Custodian (name and contact details)

Oddvar Vasstveit, Head of Manuscripts collection, National Library of Norway, Oslo Division  
P.O.Box 2674 Solli  
N-0203 Oslo  
Norway

**Telephone** +47 23 27 60 60

**Fax** +47 23 27 60 10

### 2.3 Legal status ( if different from 2.1)

- (a) category of ownership (e.g. public, corporate or private)  
Public property
- (b) details of legal and administrative provisions for the preservation of the documentary heritage  
National Library of Norway, Oslo Division, Conservation Unit
- (c) accessibility  
Public access in the Manuscripts Reading Room
- (d) copyright status  
  
No copyright restrictions, under the obligation to refer to correct source and institution

### 2.4 Responsible administration

National Library of Norway, Oslo Division: Manuscripts Collection and Conservation Unit

## 3. Identification

### 3.1 Description and inventory

Two manuscript numbers (NBO Ms.4° 1113 and Ms.8° 952) containing autograph notes, drafts, fair copy and printer's copy of one of Ibsen's most important plays.

### 3.2 Bibliographic/Registration details

#### **Ms.4° 1113**

Subdivided into items a-h. Items a-g are bound in one volume, h-i are loose folios. Item g is a copy, *not autographed*, of Ms.8° 952, and is therefore not of interest in this connection.

- a) Notes, dated October 19, 1878. 4 folios
- b) Draft for Act 2. 16 folios
- c) Draft for Act 3. 6 folios
- d) Fragment of draft for Act 2. 1 folio.
- e) Notes for Act 2. 1 folio
- f) First fair copy, with autograph corrections. Dated before and after each act (May 2 – August 3, 1879). 70 folios
- g)
- h) Notes and drafts for Act 1. 2 folios
- i) A former f.20 of Ms.8° 952, with drafts added. 1 folio

#### **Ms.8° 952**

Autographed printer's copy of the whole play. 1 volume (88 folios)

### 3.3 Visual documentation, if appropriate (for example, photographs or a video of the documentary heritage)

Digital facsimiles can be found on the following website:

<http://www.dokpro.uio.no/litteratur/ibsen/ms/ms.html>

### 3.4 History

**Ms.4° 1113 a-g** was given to the library by Henrik Ibsen's wife Suzannah Ibsen in 1906, after the death of the playwright.

**Ms.4° 1113 h-i** was bought by the library from Henrik Ibsen's grandson Tancred Ibsen in 1970.

**Ms.8° 952** was given to the library by Mr. Ejnar Levison, Copenhagen, in 1931.

3.5 Bibliography: Please indicate up to three published sources describing the proposed documentary heritage.

Ibsen, Henrik 1938. *Samlede verker*. Ved Francis Bull, Halvdan Koht, Didrik Arup Seip. Hundreårsutgave. Oslo, Gyldendal, vol. 6.

The manuscript material will be thoroughly described in the forthcoming *Henrik Ibsens skrifter* [*Henrik Ibsen's Writings*] (2003-2010).

3.6 Names, qualifications and contact details of up to three independent people or organizations with expert knowledge about the values and provenance of the documentary heritage

*Professor Errol Durbach*, Ph.D.. Professor and Head of the Department of Theatre and Film at the University of British Columbia. Author of books and articles on Henrik Ibsen. Of great relevance is Durbach's *A Doll's House : Ibsen's Myth of Transformation* Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1992. Experienced director; has staged several Ibsen plays. Address: Department of Theatre and Film, UBC, Vancouver, Canada, V6T 1W5

*Professor John Northam*, Ph.D.. Retired Professor of Drama and Literature at the University of Cambridge and the University of Bristol, England. Author of books and articles on Henrik Ibsen. Of great relevance is Northam's *Ibsen's Dramatic Method : A Study of the Prose Dramas*. London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1952. Experienced director; has staged several Ibsen plays. Address: 94 Oxford Road, Cambridge CB4 3PL, England

*Professor Vigdis Ystad*, Dr.Philos.. Professor of Scandinavian and Comparative literature, University of Oslo. Books and articles on Henrik Ibsen; co-editor of *Ibsen Studies*; General Editor of *Henrik Ibsens skrifter* [*Henrik Ibsen's Writings*]; with first rate knowledge of the entire collection of manuscript material left by Henrik Ibsen. Address: Centre for Ibsen Studies, University of Oslo, P.O.Box 1166 Blindern, 0316 Oslo

#### 4. Management plan – see below Annex 1

##### (Annex I)

- **Preservation procedures**

Today The National Library of Norway, Oslo Division has a strongroom that is climatized to quite stable levels: 18-20°C and 46-48%RH, and the air is filtered to avoid air pollutants as nitrogenoxides, sulphurdioxides and ozon.

In the other strongrooms the temperature and RH vary throughout the seasons. In the summer they range within 18-20 °C, 35-40% RH. In the winter they stay within 22-24°C, > 20% RH. The variations are slow because of the very thick granite walls.

There are major renovation plans for the library. Within a couple of years we shall have new underground storerooms, where the possibility to adapt and monitor the climate conditions will be optimal. The condition levels are planned to be kept stable within 18°C and 35-45% RH; there will be air-filtering, steel shelving, high security and special handling procedures.

- **Preservation treatments employed**

The National Library of Norway, Oslo Division has a small conservation studio with skilled staff. The manuscripts are in good condition and under regular control. The paper is of high quality, and no ink corrosion has occurred. No extra preservation treatment is needed at present.

- **Disaster prevention**

The current disaster prevention plan will be reformulated to match the requirements for the planned underground storerooms (finished 2003).

- **Number of preservation staff**

The National Library of Norway, Oslo Division employs two conservators in the fields of paper-, book- and photo-conservation. The staff attends international courses and conferences.

- **Description of how**

Preservation is an integrated part of the collection development policy of The National Library of Norway, Oslo Division, and is constantly attuned to the prevailing situation at the library.

#### 5. Assessment against the Selection Criteria

##### 5.1 Assessment of the documentary heritage against each criterion described in Annex 2.

##### **Criterion 1, "Influence":**

*A Doll's House* has been staged throughout the world, and still is - one and a half century later. Few plays have had a similar impact globally on social norms and conditions. Few play characters world wide can claim an equivalent importance as role model as Nora Helmer.

The first known draft of the play is entitled "Notes on the Tragedy of the Present Age" (Rome, 19 October 1878). When published in 1879, the play revolutionised contemporary Western drama, both formally and thematically.

The manuscripts constitute a unique and necessary source for Ibsen scholars and scholars of textual criticism. The manuscript material is a source of great importance to historians, scholars in the history of ideas, psychologists, sociologists, and other fields.

### **Criterion 2, "Time"**

The manuscript material provides first-rate interpretation of social conditions and women's situation in nineteenth-century Europe, and constitutes valuable source material for the study of morality in the Victorian era. Yet, the play has proven its relevance to society and the situation of women far beyond the nineteenth century.

### **Criterion 5, Subject/Theme**

In this manuscript material, Henrik Ibsen puts the Women's question and social structures in nineteenth-century Europe to the test in a new and revolutionary way.

### **Criterion 5, Form and Style**

The manuscript material demonstrates the creation and progress of a new dramatic form. Henrik Ibsen expresses the thematics of the "Tragedy of the Present Age" in the form of "The Modern Realistic Drama of Social Problems".

He gave theatrical art a new vitality by bringing into European bourgeois drama an ethical gravity, a psychological depth, and a social significance which the theatre had lacked since the days of William Shakespeare. In this manner, Ibsen strongly contributed to giving European drama a vitality and artistic quality comparable to the ancient Greek tragedies. Ibsen places "ordinary" men and women in the protagonist roles known from classical tragedy. That is, he converts the classical dramatic form into a prose play that is both traditional and modern.

The result is a new dramatic genre with a significant impact on Western drama and society, and by extension the dramatic art and social thinking of Asia and most of the world.

### **Criterion 7, Social Value**

Cf. 4.1 and 4.2

In *A Doll's House* Henrik Ibsen sent his main female character out into the world with a demand that a woman too must have the freedom to develop as an adult, independent, and responsible person. The play had a prompt, shocking effect, at times to the point of upheaval. Regarded as a serious attack on social stability, it made the playwright world-famous in a short time span. We experience the individual in opposition to the majority, society's oppressive authority. Nora puts it this way: "I will have to find out who is right, society or myself".

*A Doll's House* is an exceptional achievement. In spite of Nora's uncertain future prospects - facing the problems a divorced woman without means would face in nineteenth century society - she has served and serves as a symbol throughout the world, for women fighting for liberation and equality.

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**Secondary Criterion 1 - Integrity:**

The manuscripts are autograph and thus authentic. They provide ample knowledge of different stages in the genesis of the work. No other autograph manuscripts of this play are known to exist.

Ibsen's draft material for *A Doll's House* is genuinely his own creation, and reveals his great originality and creativity in an unsurpassed way.

**Secondary Criterion 2 - Rarity:**

The manuscripts are absolutely unique. Cp. Secondary Criterion 1 above.

There are few other writers whose creative process can be studied in such detail as Ibsen's, not least due to the abundantly rich draft material available for many of his plays. The material for *A Doll's House* is among the richest of these sources, unique in its preserved completeness.

5.3 An evaluation of the authenticity

The material consists of autograph manuscripts, and the authenticity of the material is thus beyond question.

5.4 An assessment of rarity (if appropriate)

See Secondary Criterion 2 above.

**6. Consultation**

6.1 Details of consultation about the nomination with the:

- (a) Owner  
as 1.4
- (b) Custodian  
as 2.2
- (c) Relevant Regional or National Memory of the World Committee (if appropriate)

Norwegian Committee for Memory of the World, Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO, Norwegian Ministry of Cultural Affairs

**7. Nominator**

7.1 Name

Ministry of Cultural Affairs/The Norwegian Memory of the World Committee/The Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO

7.2 Relationship to documentary heritage

Cf. 2.1 and 2.3

### 7.3 Contact person (if appropriate)

**Bendik Rugaas**, National Librarian, National Library of Norway  
**Ingunn Kvisterøy**, Deputy Secretary-General, Norwegian National Commission for UNESCO

### 7.4 Contact details

**National Library of Norway**,  
P.O.Box 2674 Solli  
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