



A DOLL'S HOUSE, PART 2

BY LUCAS HNATH

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY
— EDUCATION PACK PART B —

11 AUGUST — 15 SEPTEMBER
SOUTHBANK THEATRE, THE SUMNER

MTC MELBOURNE
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COMPANY

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On the Blog

— WELCOME —



Virginia Lovett and Brett Sheehy

A Doll's House, Part 2 was one of the most talked about shows on Broadway last year, and for good reason.

Lucas Hnath has taken Henrik Ibsen's classic and told the story of what happened next. An audacious act by Hnath, for sure, but one executed with such skill that it honours the original beautifully while giving new life to the infamous characters.

The result is a creation with a unique voice, infused with humour and a masterful blend of the traditional and the modern. We couldn't be happier that Melbourne gets to see it in its first international production.

Directed by 2018 Helpmann Award-winner and MTC Associate Director Sarah Goodes, *A Doll's House, Part 2* stars Marta Dusseldorp, 20 years after last performing with the Company, alongside Zoe Terakes, making her MTC debut, and Company favourites Deidre Rubenstein and Greg Stone. This stellar line-up, along with the brilliant design team, have brought the show to life impeccably. We hope you enjoy analysing and discussing the incredible work of everyone involved.

Brett Sheehy AO
Artistic Director and CEO

Virginia Lovett
Executive Director & Co-CEO

— ABOUT THIS RESOURCE —

Part B of the *A Doll's House, Part 2* Education Pack is designed to help you analyse the production in relation to your VCE Theatre Studies curriculum. This is a post-show resource, and is best used in combination with Part A of the Education Pack. Revisit Part A for information about the structure, setting, characters, contextual information, theatrical styles, and the playwright. While this pack is intended to support your study, teachers and students should consult the VCE Study Design and VCAA documents for information about assessment tasks and examinations



Education Pack – Part A

To download Part A of this Education Pack, visit mtc.com.au/education

MTC acknowledges the Yalukit Willam Peoples of the Boon Wurrung, the Traditional Owners of the land on which Southbank Theatre and MTC HQ stand, and we pay our respects to Melbourne's First Peoples, to their ancestors and Elders, and to our shared future.

— THEATRE STUDIES UNIT 4 —

AREA OF STUDY 3 – OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse and evaluate acting in a production. To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the character/s in the production including status, motivation and characteristics
- interpretation by actor/s of a playscript in performance
- expressive skills including facial expression, voice, gesture, movement, stillness and silence used by the actor/s to realise character/s
- the use of focus and the acting space
- the use of language to convey the intended meanings of the play
- the interrelationships between acting, direction and design
- the establishment and maintenance of the actor–audience relationship
- the interrelationships between acting and theatrical style/s utilised in the production
- understanding of theatrical terminology and expressions to analyse and evaluate a theatrical production.

KEY SKILLS

- analyse the character/s in the production including status, motivation and characteristics
- analyse and evaluate interpretation by actor/s of a playscript in performance, including the acting skills used by actor/s to realise character/s, the use of focus and the acting space and the interrelationships between acting, direction and design
- analyse the use of language to convey the intended meanings of the play
- analyse and evaluate the establishment and maintenance of the actor–audience relationship
- analyse the ways that actor/s work within the theatrical style/s utilised in the production
- use theatre terminology and expression appropriately



Greg Stone and Marta Dusseldorp

— NORA (MARTA DUSSELDORP) —

MOTIVATION

Marta Dusseldorp suggests that the practical driving force behind her character, Nora, is to get her divorce filed. ‘She has found out that Torvald never filed it when she left fifteen years ago,’ Dusseldorp explains, ‘and she needs him to do that because she has behaved as an unmarried woman.’ In late 1800s Norway, that meant Nora could go to jail, because she had signed contracts and conducted business without the consent of her husband. ‘She has also had lovers, so she’s been unfaithful, and she did all that thinking they were no longer married.’



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘I think that there is also an emotional and psychological reasons she’s come back: it is impossible to walk away so completely as a wife, as a mother, and as a human being. She could have easily just sent a letter demanding him to sign the divorce, but instead she turns up herself. I think she does it because this needs for there to be a reckoning. She needs to have the story completed, and I think that is something that is totally relatable in a modern audience, that we have to finish what we start, otherwise we can’t truly be free.’



Discuss motivations

Discuss Nora’s practical and emotional/psychological motivations.
Discuss how Nora’s motivation shifts throughout the course of the play.

EXPRESSIVE SKILLS



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘The first thing I do in theatre, is I look at the weight of a character: where is her centre; where does she land her weight? Shoes are vital for me. Nora wears boots. She has metaphorically been walking for fifteen years. Then you look at what the character says and does. These things can be opposing, or forward-moving: are you pulled by the argument, or do you push the argument? Do you believe in what you’re saying? Are you saying something, but behaving in a different way? You’re always looking for energies that are opposing, in yourself and with the other character.’



Discuss movement

Where was Nora’s centre? Where did Dusseldorp land her weight when playing this character? What part of the body did Nora lead with? How did Nora’s boots affect her movement?



Marta Dusseldorp

CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to the physical characteristics of Nora, as expressed through design elements and expressive skills, there are also emotional and intellectual characteristics. ‘Nora arrives fully formed, in her mind,’ says Dusseldorp, ‘a single woman, and she has lived her life.’



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘The way that Nora grows through the play is through the other characters, and through the obstacles that they present.’



Graph the growth

Draw graphs of the play, where one axis is time and the other is status, control, power, pain or peace. Plot Nora’s journey on the graph, and annotate key points in the play, or obstacles, where change occurs.



Deidre Rubenstein and Marta Dusseldorp

Anne Marie was Nora’s nanny, and because Nora’s mother died when she was quite young, Anne Marie has brought her up. Now, Nora is relying on Anne Marie to help her convince Torvald to file the divorce. ‘She refuses to help, and Nora’s not expecting this,’ says Dusseldorp. ‘So like any good drama, Nora hits an obstacle to what she sees as a very simple, pragmatic transaction. In hitting that obstacle, it means emotions start to rise. That’s not just anger, that can also push into intellect. That’s what’s so great about this play: there is an intellectual badinage that usurps any emotional drowning out.’

What follows is a series of obstacles: first Torvald, then Emmy. Dusseldorp explains that when Nora is reunited with Torvald, she is forced to receive the consequences of her actions fifteen years prior. ‘She thinks she’s got all the answers, she thinks she knows exactly what she needs, but Torvald refuses to give it to her, and also explains to her the consequences of what she did. I think that’s great for a modern audience too because we understand that there are consequences to actions.’

The third obstacle is when Nora realises her only option is to meet her daughter, Emmy. ‘This is where, for me, the play reaches its emotional centre,’ says Dusseldorp. ‘You put the daughter in front of the mother, they don’t know each other and haven’t seen each other for fifteen years, and you realise the emotional chasm that needs to be crossed. Hnath manages to articulate that through intellect for the first half of their scene, and the second half becomes a Greek tragedy where we start plunging further into what has been lost.’



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘During this scene Nora lets go of her original objective, which was to simply get the divorce, and understands she doesn’t need it, she now needs to face the fact that she hasn’t been divorced and use that as her next weapon to the world, to change how the world is toward women. We suddenly see a new Nora with a new manifesto and a new hope for the future, which is where we are now as modern people, and women, and most men too, hoping for a better future for women.’

At this point, Nora is willing to go to jail, confess that she was married, and face the consequences. ‘In a way, she becomes a martyr for her cause. This is a woman who understands what that means, her sacrifice has been huge.’



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘At the end of the play there’s a speech to explain what she went through to understand who she is now. It’s about sacrifice, silence, and it brings into the room the idea of what are you willing to give up in your life to make the world a better place. It goes outside of the I and into the us.’



Discuss sacrifice

Discuss with a partner what Nora sacrificed upon walking out on her family the first time, and what she has gained in the fifteen years since. What do you think of her decision? What do you think about her choice to confess and face the consequences at the end of this play?

Torvald eventually makes the greatest sacrifice he can by giving Nora the divorce. However, by this point, Nora no longer needs it. ‘They savage each other, it becomes very emotional with intellectual stabs,’ says Dusseldorp, ‘but out of that is the ultimate reckoning of their relationship to allow them to stand side by side.’ Dusseldorp believes Nora’s exit at the end of *A Doll’s House, Part 2* is final. ‘She goes off to be this new person, I think never to return. She has finished the thing that she started.’



Discuss the final exit

Discuss the play’s final moments. What do you think Nora will do next?

‘I think that’s what Hnath always intended,’ says Dusseldorp, ‘to explore how you finish something like this, and that you can. That’s good to know in life too, that you can actually put something to rest, and not let that define you for the rest of your life.’



Q&A with Marta Dusseldorp

To read the full Q&A with Marta Dusseldorp, visit mtc.com.au/backstage.



Marta Dusseldorp

— TORVALD (GREG STONE) —

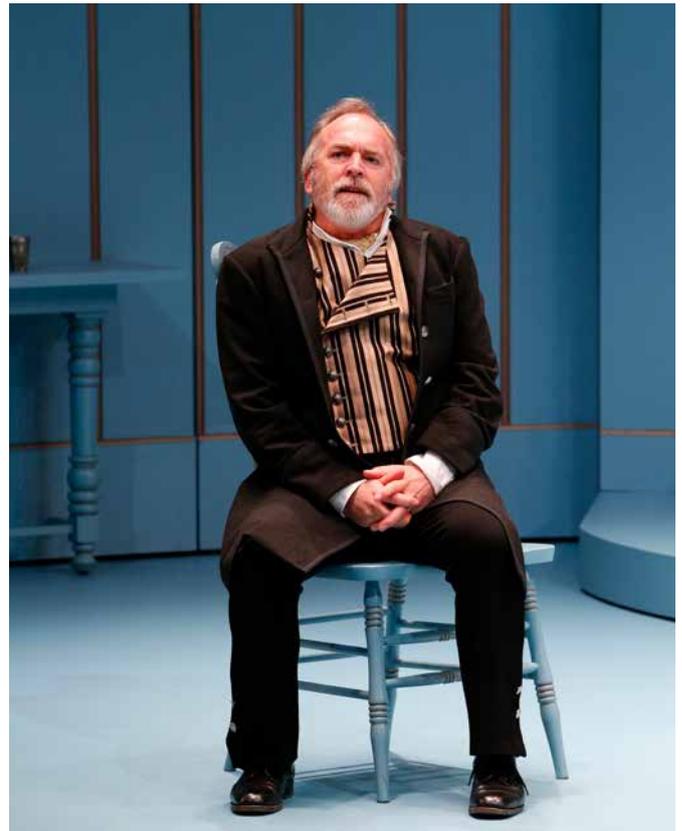
MOTIVATION

Greg Stone says that his character, Torvald, has spent the last fifteen years trying to cope with a terrible loss in his life. ‘He’s been trying to raise his children, do his job, and bury a lot of the pain that he has.’ During the course of the play, we discover that he hasn’t even told people that Nora has left him; he’s just left it to people to speculate what’s happened. ‘I don’t think Nora is even mentioned in the house anymore,’ says Stone.



Greg Stone (Torvald)

‘I think his driving force is just to live, and to get by. However, his driving force changes when Nora turns up at the front door. I’m in the process of finding out what that is now, but I think his driving force from there as the play goes on is to show Nora that he has changed. He is a different person, he has learnt, and he is a good guy. When he reads Nora’s book, he doesn’t want what’s described there to be his legacy. He wants to be a better man, and to be seen as a better man. He even says that: *‘I’m just trying to be a good guy here.’*



Greg Stone

CHARACTERISTICS

At the start, we see Torvald “the banker”. ‘He’s different from the original *A Doll’s House*,’ explains Stone, ‘he’s older, he’s damaged by fifteen years of pain, but he’s still quite bound.’ Torvald is shocked to see Nora; he does not recognise her at first. Stone says Torvald imagined what it would be like to see Nora, but wasn’t expecting her to show up so suddenly like she does in the play. ‘There are two scenes with Torvald, and he’s different in each scene. In the first scene, he’s very rigid and by the end of it he’s still angry and refusing to give Nora the divorce. But a shift happens to him offstage, and by the second scene he comes back quite a different man as he speaks his truth.’

When we first meet Torvald, he doesn’t want to give Nora the divorce because he’s so bitter and angry. ‘He wants Nora to see what she’s done to him and his children,’ says Stone, ‘but after he reads her book, he realises that he doesn’t want to be remembered as that man.’



Greg Stone (Torvald)

‘He grows, he’s learnt a lot from Nora leaving him. He comes to some kind of understanding about what the marriage was. He says things like *‘Maybe I would like what you really are,’* to Nora. He finds another side of himself, and he also finds a fighter within him. He fights the clerk in the clerk’s office when he asks for the divorce. He’s prepared to let everything go, to expose the lies he’s been perpetuating all these years. He owns up to it and says he’ll face the consequences.’



Graph the growth

Draw graphs of the play, where one axis is time and the other is status, control, power, pain or peace. Plot Torvald's journey on the graph, and annotate key points in the play, or obstacles, where change occurs.

EXPRESSIVE SKILLS

As Stone describes above, Torvald's movements are initially rigid, however we see a loosening up evident in his body later in the play. Stone speaks in mostly his own voice and accent, a deliberate choice by the director.



Greg Stone (Torvald)

'I think there's a stripping down of him by the end of the play, so there's something a bit more real about him. At the moment I'm rehearsing him so at the beginning you see the pomposity of the old Torvald from *A Doll's House*, but as the play goes on he becomes a bit looser. By the end we see his waistcoat open, his shirt open, and blood on his face.'



Discuss acting and design

Discuss the interrelationship between acting and design in Torvald's second scene, when he returns with blood on his face.

THE PLAYSRIPT



Deidre Rubenstein and Greg Stone

Stone says that each character in the play makes assumptions about how things are, even Nora. 'What's beautiful about the play is that it's four perspectives,' says Stone. 'It's not just Nora's perspective; it's also Torvald's, Anne Marie's, and Emmy's. The genius of the play is that all of those points of view are valid.' Stone explains that it has taken the cast and creative team some time to figure out how to pitch the play. 'There's a particular playing style that we've discovered we have to do, and that's to not indulge in the emotions – have them there, bury them there – but to drive the ideas through.' He suggests that *A Doll's House, Part 2* would work as a radio play, highlighting the importance of the text. 'What we've found is that we've got to own up to the words. As David Mamet said, "invent nothing, deny nothing."'



Q&A with Greg Stone

To read the full Q&A with Greg Stone, visit mtc.com.au/backstage.

— ANNE MARIE — (DEIDRE RUBENSTEIN)

Deidre Rubenstein describes her character, Anne Marie, as a faithful servant who has given up her own life completely to be a dutiful and loving servant. She was like a mother to Nora, and has kept everything going in the Helmer house while she's been away, looking after Torvald and raising the children.

MOTIVATION

Anne Marie is driven by a desire to set things right. 'Now that Nora has come back,' says Rubenstein, 'Anne Marie would like to have some kind of reconciliation.' However there also exists in her some resentment for Nora and her decision to leave fifteen years ago. Anne Marie has also made enormous sacrifices to work for the Helmers. As a consequence of the inequality in society in late 1800s Norway, Anne Marie was forced to give up her own children in order to obtain a better life.

EXPRESSIVE SKILLS

Hnath says that Anne Marie has a limp, so Rubenstein's performance incorporates a small hobble to portray Anne Marie's arthritic knees. 'I went to a physio and they suggested she walk on the sides of her feet,' says Rubenstein, 'and they gave me an exercise to counteract any negative effect that might have.' Anne Marie is not young, she's tired, but she also has a great spirit and sense of humour. She's also a different class from the Helmers, so she doesn't speak as well as they do.



Deidre Rubenstein (Anne Marie)

'For me as an actor, the voice is always my way in. I've arrived at the way my Anne Marie speaks through an internal and intuitive process. We're not doing British accents – Sarah Goodes (director) wanted us to speak in our own voice – which I think adds to the immediacy of the work.'

'We're also in period clothes,' notes Rubenstein. 'There's a fascinating juxtaposition between the strictures of the clothes we're wearing, and the contemporary nature of the language, and that dissonance – what that sets up – is fascinating.' She believes it will be great for the audience to come from those two perspectives simultaneously, 'to be reminded of how it was, and to think about how it is now. Everything is in the light of everything else.'



Discuss interrelationships

Discuss the interrelationships between acting, direction and design, with reference to Rubenstein's comments about costume and language above.



Deidre Rubenstein



Deidre Rubenstein and Marta Dusseldorp

CHARACTERISTICS

Rubenstein suggests that Anne Marie blames herself for allowing Nora to come. In the script, she does express regret at replying to Nora's letter. When things start to get out of hand, and lies are revealed, Anne Marie becomes visibly upset. However, Rubenstein notes that 'in fact I think she achieves what she had most wanted, albeit with pain along the way. Emmy does meet her mother. Nora has to come to terms with the fallout from her leaving, and she and Torvald do arrive at an honest, and almost affectionate, resolution.'



Deidre Rubenstein (Anne Marie)

'Anne Marie is able to speak her own truth, and be a voice of truth. She names things very clearly. Anne Marie really thinks she's screwed things up, though she had the best of intentions.'

Rubenstein says Hnath's script is unusual in that it's a series of argument points, 'like a debate, but infused with such humanity. It's brilliantly constructed and the stakes are very high.' She points to the juxtaposition of period and contemporary in this play as being unique. 'I also love the daring nature of the fact that it's *Part 2*, it's so audacious.'



Q&A with Deidre Rubenstein

To read the full Q&A with Deidre Rubenstein, visit mtc.com.au/backstage.



Annotate production photos

Write notes beside the production photos throughout this pack to describe acting skills, design, direction, etc.

— EMMY (ZOE TERAKES) —

MOTIVATION

Zoe Terakes says her character, Emmy, is driven by self-protection. Having never met her mother, Emmy has developed resilience and independence. She has been raised by Anne Marie in her mother's absence, and has buried the pain of Nora's abandonment.



Zoe Terakes (Emmy)

'She is incredibly motivated by not letting her mother see the damage that has been done over fifteen years, and goes out of her way to make it appear that she's not hurt. She tries to convince Nora that everyone was better off without her, but really, there's fifteen years of pain.'

CHARACTERISTICS

Terakes explains that cracks start to form during the play as Emmy and Nora become more familiar with each other. Emmy is nineteen, and because Nora has been gone fifteen years, she has no memory of her mother, but a lifetime awareness of her leaving. Terakes describes the fall of Emmy's 'great expectation', when she realises that Nora didn't want to see her. 'She starts to hate hope,' says Terakes, 'because hope means hurt. When hope starts to grow in her, that's when Emmy starts to crack. She thinks, "I did want to see you, and I miss you all the time, but you don't care". Emmy is the cost of Nora's decision, so we see this girl who is so cold because she's had no warmth in her life.' Terakes comments that while Emmy is close to Anne Marie, she does not consider her nanny to be family.



Zoe Terakes (Emmy)

'Emmy never saw Nora leave when she was a child, but this time she does. It's one thing to know it, but another to see it, so I think the aftermath of her leaving this time would be much more drastic. Everyone has more awareness and more to lose this time. In order for the play to work, we have to go with Nora out that door. I think it's a deliberate choice from Hnath not to show the aftermath, so we're on Nora's side. We're positioned with her, and we walk out with her.'



Discuss Emmy

Discuss Emmy's emotional and psychological characteristics, and the difference between when we first meet her, and the end of the play. How does Emmy grow and change during the play?



Zoe Terakes

EXPRESSIVE SKILLS

Terakes says stillness is an important element of Emmy's character. 'Personally, I'm a big mover,' she says, 'so I'm learning to put my hands behind my back and be poised as Emmy, because her stillness is her power.' This is accompanied by a similarly controlled voice and facial expression, which Emmy almost uses as a protective shield when she first meets her mother.



Zoe Terakes (Emmy)

'Stillness is how she shows she doesn't care. As that stillness starts to unravel, you start to see a "holding down", a physical manifestation of trying to maintain the mask, to keep things within and contained.'



Discuss 'holding down'

What does Terakes mean by 'holding down'? Emulate her character's physicality in your own body, and try to describe it in a paragraph. Do you recall particular lines accompanying this gesture?

Terakes believes the silences in *A Doll's House, Part 2*, and what they're filled with, are really interesting things to think about. 'That's what we're talking about in rehearsal right now,' she said in Week 3 of rehearsal.



Q&A with Zoe Terakes

To read the full Q&A with Zoe Terakes, visit mtc.com.au/backstage.



Marta Dusseldorp and Zoe Terakes



Marta Dusseldorp and Zoe Terakes

— ACTOR-AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP —

In Week 3 of rehearsal, the cast were speculating about the nature of the actor-audience relationship in this play. ‘I’m fascinated to see how this will be received,’ said Rubenstein, ‘because my sense is that every single audience member will be identifying with each character at various points in the play’. Stone agrees: ‘I think the audience are going to go with one character for a while, and then switch teams and go with another character.’ He imagines there will be shifting allegiances, and that the cast will be able to hear that from audience reactions. He also comments on the comedy inherent the script. ‘I have a feeling that there’s going to be a lot of humour,’ says Stone, ‘lots of laughter of recognition of these characters for audience who know the original.’ Each of the cast point to Hnath’s description of the playing space being ‘forum-like’ as a clue to the play’s temperature. ‘To me, the actor-audience relationship is crucial,’ says Dusseldorp. ‘It’s the final bit of the puzzle, and we are all very aware of that. We can’t wait to meet them.’

Consider the following comments from the cast about the actor-audience relationship in *A Doll’s House, Part 2*:



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘This play is a conversation with the audience. Because of its debate potential, there are sides to be taken, and they change all the time. We’re finding in the rehearsal room that you think you’re with someone, and then suddenly you think another perspective is valid too. It shows the non-black-and-whiteness of people’s perspectives and where they come from. We’re going to need the audience to tell us how clear we’re being.’



Deidre Rubenstein (Anne Marie)

‘Every character’s point is valid, and you see how fallible we all are, and how noble we all are. I think the audience will be examining their own lives in relation to the ideas that are brought up in the play, to the most inordinate degree. There’s no real narrative, it totally is a play of ideas, but it has great humanity. I suspect it will be quite visceral for an audience.’



Zoe Terakes (Emmy)

‘I think the audience is with Nora, and she’s the vehicle by which they see all our points of view. You follow her, like you’re on train, and at each stop you see other characters from her point of view. Then sometimes you get off the train, and you side with another character, but we always jump back on the train.’



Greg Stone (Torvald)

‘There’s a heightened realism to the way that the play is written, it’s not written naturalistically, and interestingly I think the U.S. production was played very much like a sitcom. We’re not going down that particular path, but there will still be a lot of humour.’



Discuss actor-audience relationship

Discuss the actors’ comments above about the actor-audience relationship in *A Doll’s House, Part 2*. Highlight key ideas that resonate with you. Discuss with a partner what your experience of watching the play was. Whose side were you on?

‘I never do theatre for any other reason than for it to resonate with an audience,’ says Dusseldorp. ‘I need them to tell me what’s resonating and what isn’t, and I can feel it in the temperature of the room.’



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘This is an interactive piece. People often ask me how I can repeat a performance night after night, but really there is no repeating. Each night we have a new jury, and each night we have to plead our case. I think what’s super clever about this piece and what Hnath has done, is that he’s managed to maintain the emotional intelligence within that. I’m hoping no one can walk out without feeling moved more than once.’

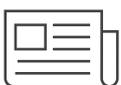


Discuss the jury

Discuss the idea of the audience being a jury in this play. How did you judge each character at the play’s conclusion? What informed your opinion?



Marta Dusseldorp



Direction

Read more about Sarah Goodes’ direction in Part A of this Education Pack at mtc.com.au/backstage.

— SET AND COSTUME DESIGN —



Tracy Grant Lord has created the set and costume designs for this production. From Tracy's earliest discussions with Sarah Goodes (director) about the work in August 2017, Grant Lord knew Goodes would have a clear vision to inform her designs. 'You take the ingredients from the director and you work with that,' she says. A set of parameters had also been established by the playwright, Lucas Hnath. The author's request for an empty, or partially empty room, and an arena or forum type space was the first consideration Grant Lord had to make.

Tracy Grant Lord



Revisit Part A

To read more about the play's setting and Hnath's notes about the space, download Part A of the Education Pack at mtc.com.au/education.



Set Model by Tracy Grant Lord

It was important to Grant Lord that a Scandinavian aesthetic, both architecturally and geographically, was incorporated into the design. This choice pays homage to Ibsen's original text and helps place the essence of the play's themes – tradition, pride and independence – on stage. Grant Lord also wanted to explore the pressures and expanse of an outer world beyond the walls of the room. She found inspiration for this exterior setting in the paintings of Norwegian artists such as Hans Dahl, who worked in the era of Ibsen, as well as contemporary Scandinavian photographers

like Elina Brotherus who specialises in self-portraits and landscapes. The world of Grant Lord's design for this production is a combination of Norwegian folk and classical period, with a contemporary edge.



Research design inspiration

Research Norwegian artist Hans Dahl and contemporary Scandinavian photographer Elina Brotherus to see some of Grant Lord's design inspiration. Annotate these images with notes about where you see their influence in what you saw on stage.

BRIDGING TWO WORLDS

The play takes place in 1894, but uses colloquial language of the present day. This juxtaposition of the traditional and contemporary worlds can be found threaded throughout the work from script to design, and there are both intimate and epic themes at play, requiring the design to represent and reflect these various collisions.



Tracy Grant Lord (Set & Costume Designer)

'It takes the classical form and honours it completely, while still keeping the contemporary voice powerful. I think it will speak to many generations.'

Grant Lord's design is scenically spare – a curved wall in Norwegian blue, doors, and minimal furniture – but audiences will notice that there is more description of character in the costumes. For example, Emmy's costume is slightly more folksy and decorative than the others, reflecting her nationalistic/conservative views. Anne Marie's costume and make-up design helps the actor to 'age up', while Nora's includes boning in the bodice to give the illusion of a corset, which creates a classical silhouette.



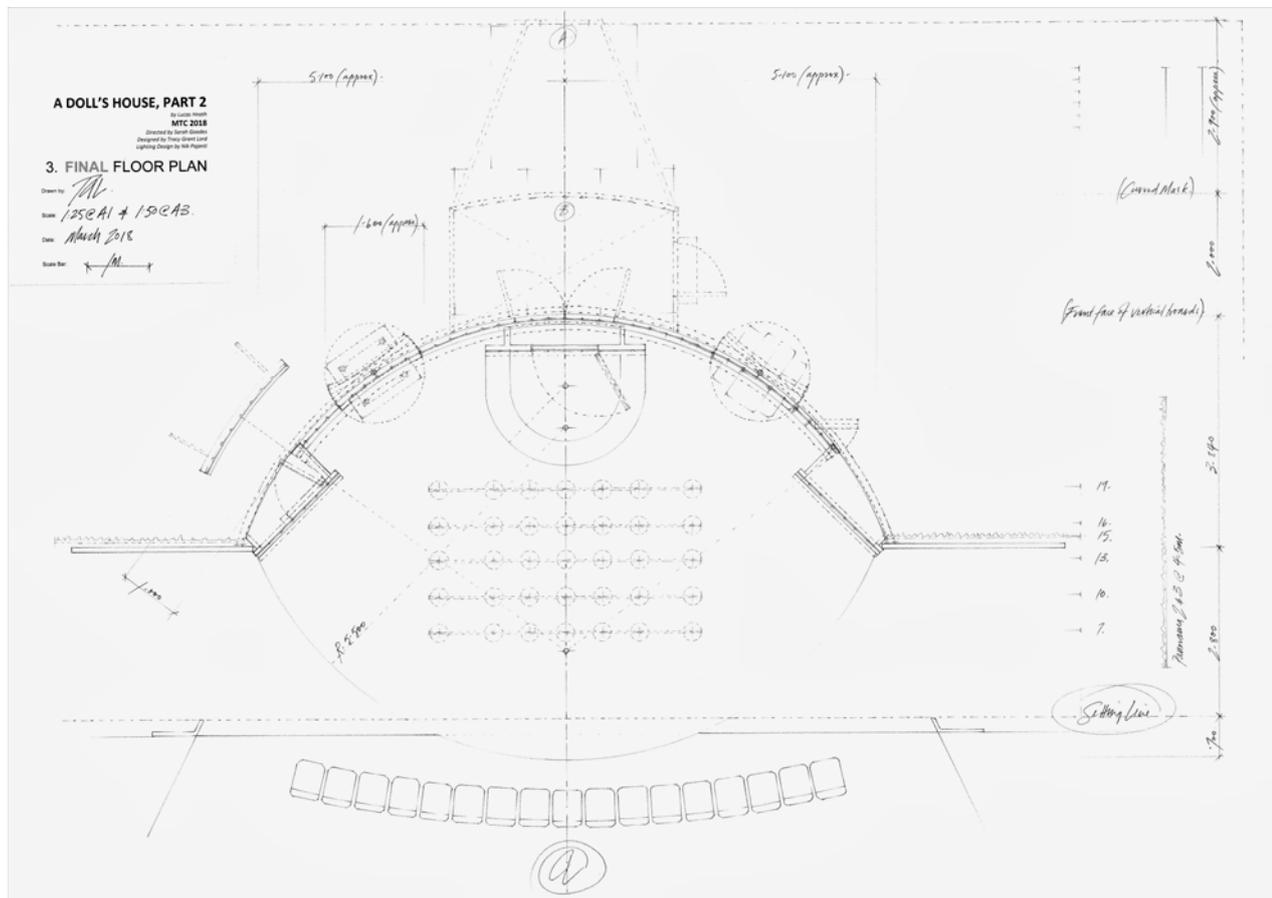
Tracy Grant Lord (Set & Costume Designer)

'A challenge has been holding the characters in their time of late 1800s visually, whilst giving them the freedom to express contemporary opinion. I aim to find sensibilities that speak to both times, and find the essence of the visual references and ideas inside the work.'



Analyse the costumes

Look at the costume designs on the following pages. Note that Grant Lord's designs are hand drawn. Annotate them to analyse how the characteristics of each character are represented in these designs.



Set Design Floor Plan by Tracy Grant Lord



Download the show programme

To read more about Tracy Grant Lord's designs, download the show programme at mtc.com.au/backstage.



Read more about video design

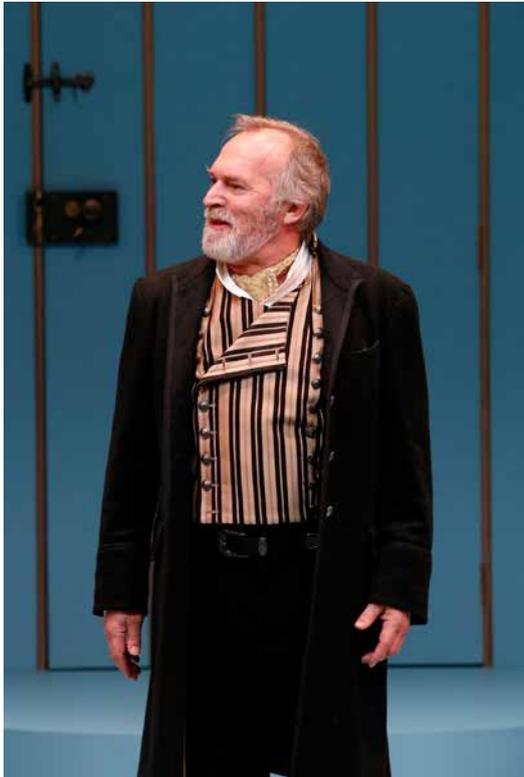
To learn more about Josh Burns' video design, visit mtc.com.au/backstage.



Marta Dusseldorp



Costume Design for Nora by Tracy Grant Lord



Greg Stone



Costume Design for Torvald by Tracy Grant Lord



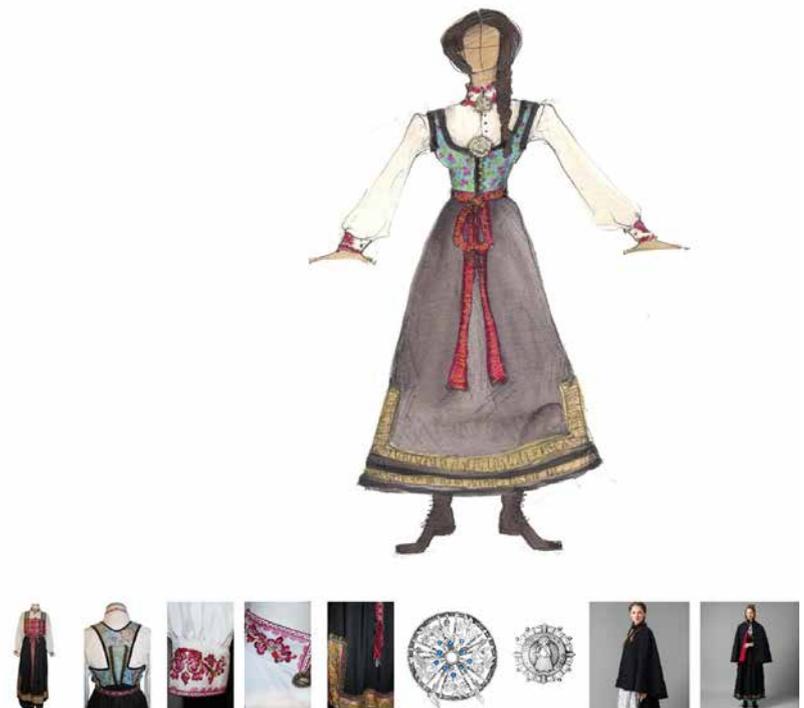
Deidre Rubenstein



Costume Design for Anne Marie by Tracy Grant Lord



Zoe Terakes



Costume Design for Emmy by Tracy Grant Lord

— COMPOSITION & SOUND DESIGN —



Chris Williams in rehearsal, with stage manager Julia Smith.

Composer and Sound Designer Chris Williams explains that his design process begins by him bringing a few ideas into the rehearsal room, most of which will need to be thrown out pretty quickly as the production emerges. ‘For me, it’s much more about being present in the process and responsive to the moment,’ he says. ‘It’s hard to judge the energy of a moment, and its timing particularly, until your actors bring it to life. Then musical ideas come (and go) very quickly.’ Williams believes pre-empting artistic choices too much can be costly in the longer term. ‘I think it’s natural to become attached to particular pieces of music, even as the drama starts to head in another direction so I’m always reminding myself you have to follow the drama, even if you’ve found a good tune!’



Chris Williams (Composer & Sound Designer)

‘The world of the play, for me, is contemporary but always imbued with echoes of both the past (the character’s pasts and Ibsen’s play) and the original Norway setting. The sound is similarly eclectic, evoking all of these elements.’

INFLUENCES

Collaboration is a key aspect of writing music for the theatre. Williams describes the creative team, in which he includes the cast, as his best guide. He says the musical influences for his sound design in *A Doll’s House, Part 2* are, like the world of the play, are eclectic. ‘Anything from ancient stone instruments to contemporary Danish pop,’ he says. ‘I’m not a purist.’



Chris Williams (Composer & Sound Designer)

‘At the moment we’re playing with the idea of introducing a tarantella (an Italian dance), which is a key dramatic element from Ibsen’s original. The music returns to Nora, at a crucial moment in *Part 2*, though in a haunted and haunting form.’



Research tarantella

The origin of the tarantella is connected with tarantism, a form of hysteria that appeared in Italy between the 15th and 17th centuries. It was obscurely associated with the bite of the tarantula spider; victims seemingly were cured by frenzied dancing. Look up videos and audio of tarantellas online, and research what context it was used in Ibsen’s original *A Doll’s House*.



Discuss transitions

Discuss the interrelationship between acting, direction and design in the moments of transition. Think about how the video and sound worked together.

DIEGETIC AND NON-DIEGETIC SOUND

In his design for *A Doll's House, Part 2*, Williams is particularly interested in sound 'on the borderline'. He is using sound that hovers between diegetic (real-world sound, e.g. a bell ringing offstage) and non-diegetic (atmospheric, e.g. music that sets a mood). 'Birdsong, bells and drums echo through the piece in ways that are not literal, but could also be considered blurred memories of the sonic space of the play or the emotional tension of the moment.'



Marta Dusseldorp and Zoe Terakes



Chris Williams (Composer & Sound Designer)

'I love blending the diegetic and the non-diegetic, blurring the division. One example is the door-knock. It's such an iconic ('diegetic') moment at the start of the play, but it returns in ('non-diegetic') musical guises throughout the show.'



List the sounds

Make a list of the sounds you heard in the play, both diegetic and non-diegetic, and those in-between. What instruments did you hear? What other sounds, e.g. door-knock and birdsong. Beside each sound, describe how it enhanced the play.



Discuss 'burring the division'

Discuss Williams' comment about blurring the division between diegetic and non-diegetic sound. Discuss the interrelationship between acting, direction and design. Consider the director's comments in Part A: 'The world of this play is a dance between classic and modern.'

ORIGINAL COMPOSITION

Williams explains that in the final moments of the play, once Nora has made her decision, there is a sort of 'coda' to the play. 'I have created an original composition, a simple piano tune that echoes through the space (combined with slowed bird songs).' The audience will have heard small snippets of this music throughout the play, but this is the first time it is revealed in full.

When asked about his advice to students, Williams says 'don't be afraid to make mistakes musically or just try something in the rehearsal room even if you think it might be wrong. It's scary, but it often leads in new directions, to better solutions, and in any case safe ideas can be boring!' For Williams, writing music for the theatre is always about looking for solutions rather than knowing the answers in advance. 'We're still discovering things about the play, and I'm sure we will continue to do so for some time yet! It's all part of the thrill of working in theatre.'



Q&A with Chris Williams

To read the full Q&A with Chris Williams, visit mtc.com.au/backstage.

— LIGHTING DESIGN —



Niklas Pajanti

Lighting Designer Niklas Pajanti's design concept aims to present several things at once; the stylised interior of a home, a public forum perhaps like a courtroom or a municipal space, a boxing ring. 'It should feel real and unreal at the same time,' he says.

MOOD

Lighting is a key stagecraft element in manipulating mood on stage. Halfway through the rehearsal period, Pajanti imagined that his lighting would probably shift throughout the show from warm and friendly to cold and interrogative and part way back again. 'I also closely follow the sound design,' says Pajanti. 'We work together to help tell the story and facilitate transitions and heighten or release moments of tension.'

THE LIGHTING GRID SET ELEMENT

Pajanti had a design challenge of introducing a lighting grid as a set element into this production. 'Usually the lights in a play don't move during the show,' explains Pajanti, 'they are rigged or set at a certain height above the stage area and stay up there.' In this production, the grid of lights he has designed gradually fly in, getting closer and closer to the performers. 'And then at the right moment it will fly out again.'



Niklas Pajanti (Lighting Designer)

'It represents several things; interrogation and increasing pressure in the dialogue, the inescapable future crashing in to these people's lives, the unavoidable fact that the world changes whether you want it to or not, technology and the modern world, an abstraction of a boxing ring as the characters circle each other, attacking, counter attacking, looking for weaknesses in each other's arguments.'



Marta Dusseldorp and Greg Stone



Discuss the lighting grid

What was your interpretation of the lighting grid lowering down closer to the stage? Discuss Pajanti's comments above. How do these ideas connect with the themes of the play? Are there specific lines in the script that you could connect to these design concepts?

Pajanti also points out the dual worlds of the stage: 'You should notice that everything below the line of the projection screen is historically accurate (the past) and everything above that line is modern (the future).' He says these are all deliberate choices and visual references that match the themes of the play.

DARKNESS

Pajanti notes that in general terms you cannot have light without dark. 'Shadows and darkness are, ironically, what help you see,' he says. 'If everything reflected light equally everywhere we would not see details in anything and gauging depth and distance would be difficult. Darkness, shadows and the absence of light provide us with scale and the contrast between objects and people that we need for visual perception. I'm always aware of that in my work.' This production also incorporates video projection, so Pajanti's design has to ensure that the content is visible when it is meant to be. 'I try to show you where to look at the right time by adjusting the lighting levels at the appropriate moments.'

THE ACTING SPACE

Hnath states at the start of the play that the space should feel a touch like a forum. 'If you investigate the meaning of that word many possible lighting concepts become apparent,' says Pajanti. 'We have pursued several of those in this production.'

INFLUENCES

Pajanti cites many influences for his lighting design, including the content and themes of the script, the desires and vision of the director, the need for visibility from the audiences point of view, the available equipment, the shape of the stage we are putting the show into, and the available hanging positions for lights. He is also influenced by the environment, surfaces and colours provided by the set designer and costume designer.



Discuss interrelationships

Discuss the interrelationships between the stagecraft elements of lighting design and costume design with acting and direction. Choose a specific moment in the play and write a paragraph that evaluates the interpretation of the playscript.

Pajanti's advice to students analysing the play is to not spent too much time thinking about the lights. 'I'm working in the background to gently manipulate you into engaging with what's happening in front of you in real time, so pay attention!' Pajanti says his design is there primarily to let you see the actors onstage telling you a story. 'Watch them. Listen to them. If you do notice the lights, remember that I'm doing things for very deliberate and considered reasons, to add layers of meaning to what's going on in the play.'



Q&A with Niklas Pajanti

To read the full Q&A with Niklas Pajanti, visit mtc.com.au/backstage.

— THEMES —

EQUALITY

For more information about the context of both Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* and Hnath’s *Part 2*, revisit Part A of this Education Pack. You may recall that Hnath’s invention of the past fifteen years of Nora’s life bestows Nora with a backstory of financial success as a feminist writer. In the context of late 1800s Norway, this is quite extraordinary. ‘Nora arrives full of her new identity that she has been curating over the last fifteen years,’ says Dusseldorp. ‘She has done very well: she’s very rich, very successful, and has managed to wrangle the world, which as a woman in that time was not so easy. I think it’s still the case. As we can see, it’s not 50/50, women do not have equity, so it’s poignant and very relatable to now. This is not a period piece.’ Dusseldorp cites Nora’s final words her favourite line in the play:

NORA: *I just hope I live to see it.*



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘The offer of this play is to incite the audience, to encourage, implicate, reassure, inspire, and to germinate the idea that you can go out there and make the world a better place.’

Terakes thinks the play is about a modern woman trapped in a time that is behind her. However, contemporary audiences may note that things have not progressed as far as Nora imagines they might have.



Zoe Terakes (Emmy)

‘Nora is driven by building a better world for women ... What stings is when you see the things that haven’t changed, where the world hasn’t evolved with us, and that’s the stuff that the play jabs you with.’

INDEPENDENCE

Rubenstein recalls an article she read about Hnath, which described a book he had on his bookshelf with a phrase that has informed a lot of his writing: “What do we owe each other?”



Deidre Rubenstein (Anne Marie)

‘I think that’s a lot of what this play is about: how true are you to your own calling, as opposed to what you owe another person? I think this play is about Nora following her own development as a person, and finding out who she is.’

Terakes believes the play is about the cost of a decision like Nora’s. ‘You might become an independent woman but there are consequences for your actions.’ The disparity between the consequences of following your calling for men and women might be evoked during the play.



Zoe Terakes

ANNE MARIE



Deidre Rubenstein and Marta Dusseldorp

EMPATHY

Terakes suggest that a key aspect of Hnath’s writing in *A Doll’s House, Part 2* is his ability to present each character’s perspective fully, so that the audience can empathise with each character entirely. ‘You want to side with Nora,’ says Terakes, ‘but when you meet Emmy, you ask, “how could you leave her?”’ Terakes says she would see this play twice if she wasn’t in it: ‘I’d watch it and take Nora’s side, and experience it that way, then I’d watch it again and side with the family. I think that way you really get to understand the play when you’re rooting for both teams.’ Terakes says that, as a feminist, she agrees with Nora’s words and actions. ‘If it was a one-woman show I’d be totally on her side. However, in this play there are three other points of conflict, which puts your feminism into question, and makes you really examine Nora’s choices.’

These larger themes are explored not only through the acting and direction, but also through stagecraft elements. Williams comments on how the music in the play underpins these emotional journeys:

.....



Chris Williams (Composer & Sound Designer)

‘Musically it’s about playing that truth. It only works if we have sympathy for everyone in the play, and we really do. I see the music as key to making sure that amidst the laughs, we still feel the power of the big ideas and the emotional core of the piece.’

.....

Stone cites his favourite line in the play as one that evokes themes of empathy and humanity:

TORVALD: *You say you’ve become so honest. So be honest with me: I’m talking about two people, spending time together, figuring out how to be around each other.*

.....



Greg Stone (Torvald)

‘I think that’s the major theme in the play for me at the moment: human interaction. Whether that’s marriage, what we do in life, friendships or within a family. That’s Torvald’s struggle.’

.....

LOVE, MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Hnath asks in the play, “What is a true marriage?” Rubenstein suggests that *A Doll’s House, Part 2* asks the audience to reflect on marriage, and examine how we might avoid becoming subsumed by it in a way that we cannot express our true nature.



Marta Dusseldorp and Deidre Rubenstein



Deidre Rubenstein (Anne Marie)

‘The play explores marriage, freedom, independence, fidelity, feminism, but all from the point of view of those times and how it applies to us now.’



Discuss themes

Discuss Rubenstein’s comments above. Which of these themes do you connect most immediately to the world in 2018?

SELF-PRESERVATION



Chris Williams (Composer & Sound Designer)

‘At the heart of the play is the pain and beauty - the tragic desperation - of self-preservation in the face of conflicting world-views. I don’t think there could be any more important theme for the world today. It’s also about the difficulty of doing and the trauma of not-doing. The show doesn’t offer any easy solutions to any of these but presents them sympathetically and with striking clarity that will convince everyone the play is written about them.’

Terakes cites a line spoken by Nora to Anne Marie as one of her favourites, and one that speaks to this theme of self-preservation:

NORA: *A wound has to be allowed to heal, no matter how much you have the desire, the urge to touch it, to -- It's not good for the ... the healing.*



Zoe Terakes (Emmy)

‘I think that’s what the whole play is about, it’s why Nora doesn’t want to see Emmy. If you poke and prod at a wound, it won’t heal.’



Other themes

Brainstorm other themes in the play with your class. Make a mind-map connecting related themes. For each example, try to find a moment from the play that demonstrates how it is explored on stage.

— LANGUAGE —

Dusseldorp says this script is written in a very particular way, it is not a normal layout. The writer, Lucas Hnath, gives the performer clues as to how to break up the thoughts and land them. ‘That has been a huge help for me,’ says Dusseldorp. ‘It has short-tracked any particularity of thought.’



Marta Dusseldorp (Nora)

‘Hnath sometimes uses words in threes. People repeat the same word when they’re trying to make a point or they’re lost for what exactly they’re trying to say. These characters aren’t overly articulate, they also struggle. Sarah Goodes has talked to us about arriving in moments where you really don’t know.’

Also in the text are ellipses (...), which are interesting to analyse. Dusseldorp says, ‘you can’t put a rule to them – we tried – and what we’ve realised is that they’re different in different times. But they’re lovely little gifts from Hnath that say *there’s something here, go find it.*’

The layout of Hnath’s script is unique and deliberate. Rubenstein cites the following excerpt as her favourite line in the play, and comments on how the text’s layout provides clues to the actors:

NORA: *It's really hard to hear your own voice,
and every lie you tell
makes your voice harder to hear,
and a lot of what we do is lying.
Especially when what we want so badly
from other people
is for them to love us.*



Deidre Rubenstein (Anne Marie)

‘That seems really profound to me. It’s very interesting how Hnath writes, the layout of the text is an indication of how to deliver it. You have to honour the punctuation.’



Marta Dusseldorp and Zoe Terakes

— ANALYSIS QUESTIONS —

The following analysis questions are offered to help you unpack the performance and make connections between components of the VCE Theatre Studies Study Design. These questions should be considered as a starting point. Discuss your responses with your peers and explore how other members of the audience may have perceived the performance differently. Make sure you use specific examples and evidence from the production to support your ideas.



Marta Dusseldorp and Deidre Rubenstein

THE RETURN OF NORA

- How were two areas of stagecraft used to enhance a theme of the play in this moment?
- How did the actor use non-verbal expressive skills in this moment?
- Analyse how the actor-audience relationship was manipulated in this moment.
- Analyse the interrelationship between acting and design in this moment.



Deidre Rubenstein, Marta Dusseldorp and Greg Stone

TORVALD ARRIVES HOME

- Analyse the status and motivation of the characters in this scene.
- Evaluate how one actor used two expressive skills in this moment.
- How was one area of stagecraft used to enhance this scene?
- Analyse how language was used to convey the intended meanings of the play in this scene.



Marta Dusseldorp and Zoe Terakes

EMMY CONFRONTS NORA

- Analyse how stillness and silence were used by the actors to realise characters in this scene.
- Evaluate how an actor used the acting space in this scene.
- Analyse how the actor-audience relationship was manipulated in this scene.
- How did one actor use movement to portray their character in this scene?



Marta Dusseldorp and Greg Stone

TORVALD HAS READ NORA'S BOOK

- Evaluate how an area of stagecraft was used to enhance this moment in the play.
- Evaluate the interrelationship between acting and direction in this moment.
- Analyse how the actor worked within a theatrical style used in the production.
- How did one actor use movement to portray their character in this scene?

— ATTENDANCE INFORMATION —



Marta Dusseldorp



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CONTENT

This production contains coarse language and sexual references. For detailed information, visit our website at mtc.com.au/production-content-guide

Approximately 1hr 30mins, no interval.

To read more about visiting with school groups visit mtc.com.au/education.

SCHOOL BOOKINGS

Email schools@mtc.com.au or phone 03 8688 0963.

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Email education@mtc.com.au or contact our Education Coordinator 03 8688 0974