



A Doll's House

PART 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	PRODUCTION CREDITS
4	AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE
5	PROFILE OF THE PLAYWRIGHT
6	PROFILE OF THE DIRECTOR
7	PLAY SYNOPSIS AND CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS
8	<i>A DOLL'S HOUSE</i> – THE ORIGINAL ALTERNATE ENDING
9	SUMMARY OF <i>A DOLL'S HOUSE</i>
10	ABOUT HENRIK IBSEN
11	GLOSSARY
13	DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
14	ABOUT THE SEGAL CENTRE FOR PERFORMING ARTS

ABOUT THE AUDIENCE GUIDE

This audience guide is written and compiled by Caitlin Murphy, Segal Centre Artistic Associate, thanks to the generous support of Richter (Inclusivity and Engagement Partner) and the Mitzi & Mel Dobrin Family Foundation. This audience guide is meant to enhance and deepen our audience's experience and understanding.

All content is intended for educational purposes only.

To reserve group tickets at a reduced rate, or for questions, comments, citations or references, please contact Patrick Lloyd Brennan:

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RICHTER

A SEGAL CENTRE PRODUCTION

CAST

NORA	Sarah Constible
TORVALD	Oliver Becker
ANNE MARIE	Victoria Barkoff
EMMY	Ellie Moon

CREATIVE TEAM

PLAYWRIGHT	Lucas Hnath
DIRECTOR	Caitlin Murphy
SET DESIGNER	Pierre-Étienne Locas
COSTUME DESIGNER	Louise Bourret
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Anne-Marie Rodrigue Lecours
SOUND DESIGNER	Christian Thomas
STAGE MANAGER	Elaine Normandeau
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER	Danielle Laurin

A DOLL'S HOUSE, PART 2 IS PRESENTED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT
WITH DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., NEW YORK.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Welcome to the Segal! We are so pleased to have you join us at our production of *A Doll's House, Part 2*. To make the most of your viewing experience and in consideration of actors and audience members around you, please be mindful of the following:

1. Cell phone use in the theatre is not permitted. Please put your cell phone on silent and refrain from taking pictures, videos or texting during the performance.
2. Please refrain from talking or opening candies during the performance.
3. Food and beverages are not permitted in the theatre.
4. Please do not kick or step over the seats when entering and exiting.
5. If you are taking notes for the purposes of writing a response or review, please be discreet to avoid distracting others.
6. Enjoy the show!

PROFILE OF THE PLAYWRIGHT

Lucas Hnath was born and raised in Orlando, Florida. In 1997, he moved to New York City to study pre-med, but then changed to dramatic writing at the Tisch School of the Arts, at New York University, earning a BFA in 2001 and an MFA in 2002. Hnath's plays include *Hillary and Clinton*, *Red Speedo*, *The Christians* and *A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney*. He teaches at New York University and has been a resident playwright at New Dramatists since 2011.

Hnath won the 2016 Obie Award for excellence in playwriting for his plays *Red Speedo* and *The Christians*, and he has also won a Whiting Award. *A Doll's House, Part 2*, marked his Broadway debut and earned Hnath a Tony nomination for Best Play. This 2017 production received seven other Tony Nominations, winning a Best Actress Award for Laurie Metcalf in the role of Nora.

ON GETTING THE IDEA TO WRITE *A DOLL'S HOUSE, PART 2*:

"Honestly, to some degree there probably wasn't that much thought that went into it, which is probably the best way to begin. I wasn't too self-conscious at the start of it. Really it came out of just such a love and appreciation of Ibsen's work [...]. The way that I started writing the play was I found a really bad translation of *A Doll's House* online and cut and pasted it into a document and started just writing each sentence, each line, in my own words, as just a way of kind of getting to know how his plays work, how he does what he does. It came out of just an excitement over a chance to get to play with it for a little bit. That plus the title I thought was kind of funny.

"Then it became an opportunity for me to think about the subjects of marriage and divorce, which are topics that I've been sort of hovering around for a while. It seemed to be a good platform to write about some subjects that I was already interested in, because it's a sequel to a play that everybody kind of at least sort of knows: "Wait—is that the one where she shoots herself or the one where she walks out the door?" It's similar to the way that I like writing plays about famous people, like Walt Disney. I like taking something that already feels a little mythic, and then starting to play with that."



- (i) Source: http://www.wikiwand.com/en/Lucas_Hnath
<https://www.vanityfair.com/style/2017/04/lucas-hnath-the-playwright-a-dolls-house>
- (ii) Photo Source: <https://assets.vogue.com/photos/5939c49e7100bb3dcda2dbde/16:9/pass/00-social-tout-lucas-hnath.jpg>

PROFILE OF THE DIRECTOR

Caitlin Murphy is a writer, director and dramaturg based in Montreal. She is currently in her second season as Artistic Associate at the Segal Centre, where she previously served three seasons as Dramaturg-in-Residence.

Last season, she was Associate Director for *Marjorie Prime*, and as Assistant Director, she has worked on *Noises Off* (dir. Jacob Tierney), *Million Dollar Quartet*, and *Bad Jews* (dir. Lisa Rubin), *Inherit the Wind* (dir. Greg Kramer), as well as *Age of Arousal* and *The Blonde, the Brunette and the Vengeful Redhead* (dir. Sarah Stanley). She also served as production dramaturg on *Intimate Apparel* and *Top Girls*, both with Micheline Chevrier.

In addition to her work in theatre, Caitlin has also written and directed several short films, including *Flushing Lacan* and *TOAST* which both won the Jury Award at the Montreal ACTRA Short Film Festival. She recently created a mini web-series, currently in post-production, called *Mothers Try*, which she wrote, directed, and stars in.

Caitlin also recently completed a commissioned play for Imago Theatre called *Tethered. A Doll's House, Part 2* marks her professional directing debut.

DIRECTOR'S QUOTE

"When I first sat down to read *A Doll's House, Part 2*, I felt pretty cynical: 'A sequel to a classic play? Really?' It seemed pretty gimmicky to me. But as I actually started reading the script, I was blown away. The writing was so robust, playful, and audacious. And the play did that thing that all my favourite plays do – it stuck characters in a closed space, and forced them to talk to people they didn't want to talk to, about things they would rather not talk about!"



PLAY SYNOPSIS

A Doll's House, Part 2 takes place 15 years after the events of Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play *A Doll's House*. In the original play, Nora Helmer, a married mother of three children, comes to believe that her marriage is a sham and domestic life is hollow; she famously decides to leave it all behind in a moment that is considered theatre history's most famous door slamming exit.

In this imagined "sequel," Nora hasn't had any contact with her family since she left them 15 years ago, but she has returned today. We learn that while she's been away she has forged a new identity as a successful writer of "women's fiction" (writing under a pseudonym) and become a strong advocate against marriage.

A series of events have revealed to Nora that she is not – as she had been assuming – actually divorced from her husband. Torvald, who hasn't remarried, never actually filed the divorce papers, and Nora, as a woman, is unable to do so herself unless she can prove some terrible transgression on the husband's part. If it were publicly revealed that Nora was actually still a married woman, much of how she's been living her life would be considered unlawful and she would be ruined. She therefore has returned to ask Torvald to make good on his word, and finally file for the divorce. But getting what she wants – this time around – may end up costing Nora too much.

"In the future, 20, 30 years from now, marriage will be a thing of the past. And those in the future will look back on us, and they'll be in shock, in total – just awe – at how stupid we are."

– Nora, *A Doll's House, Part 2*

"I actually think it's good to be stuck in a marriage."

– Emmy, *A Doll's House, Part 2*

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

NORA HELMER – a writer and women's rights advocate; was married to Torvald for eight years with whom she had three children

TORVALD HELMER – a banker; Nora's former husband

EMMY HELMER – Nora and Torvald's youngest child and only daughter; 18 years old

ANNE MARIE – The Helmer house's nanny; she also took care of Nora when she was a girl, essentially raising her

A DOLL'S HOUSE – THE ORIGINAL

SOME IMPORTANT DATES IN THE PRODUCTION HISTORY OF HENRIK IBSEN'S *A DOLL'S HOUSE*

1879 – World premiere of *A Doll's House* at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, directed by H. P. Holst. Betty Hennings originated the role of the protagonist, Nora.

1880 – Revised version of *A Doll's House* with an alternate ending premiered in Flensburg, Germany. The actress playing Nora, Hedwig Niemann-Raabe, was outraged at the notion that a mother would leave her children (“I would never leave my children!”) and thus refused to perform the play as written. Ibsen decided to avoid the ending being re-written by a lesser dramatist and offered an alternate ending where Nora does not leave. The curtain instead falls after Torvald shows Nora the children and she sinks to the ground. However, after protests at the Residenztheater in Berlin against the “distortion of the play,” Niemann-Raabe reverted back to the original script.

1884 – Although the original script was forbidden to be performed in London, an adaptation of *A Doll's House* by Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman renamed *Breaking a Butterfly* premiered at the Princess Theatre in London.

1889 – American début on Broadway at the Palmer's Theatre.

1973 – Two films versions of *A Doll's House* are released, one by British director Patrick Garland (screenplay written by Christopher Hampton based on Ibsen's original script), starring Anthony Hopkins and Clare Bloom, and the other by American director Joseph Losey (screenplay written by David Mercer based on Ibsen's original script), starring Jane Fonda and David Warner.

2007 – Directed by Lee Breur, the avant-garde Mabou Mines theatre company played a production of *A Doll's House* at the Edinburgh Festival in which dwarves played all the male roles to play with the gender bias in Nora's society. This radical rendition increased the ludicrousness of Torvald's insistence on patronizing his “poor little Nora” (“Mabou”).

2018 – There is a forthcoming film adaptation set against the backdrop of the current economic crisis, with Ben Kingsley as Doctor Rank and Michele Martin as Nora.

(i) Source: <https://pages.stolaf.edu/dollshouse/production-history/>

ALTERNATE ENDING

NORA: ...Where we could make a real marriage out of our lives together. Goodbye. (*Begins to go*)

HELMER: Go then! (*Seizes her arm.*) But first you shall see your children for the last time!

NORA: Let me go! I will not see them! I cannot!

HELMER: (*draws her over to the door, left*) You shall see them. (*Opens the door and says softly.*) Look, there they are asleep, peaceful and carefree. Tomorrow, when they wake up and call for their mother, they will be – motherless.

NORA: (*trembling*) Motherless....!

HELMER: As you once were.

NORA: Motherless! (*Struggles with herself, lets her travelling-bag fall and says.*) Oh, this is a sin against myself, but I cannot leave them (*Half sinks down by the door*).

HELMER: (*joyfully, but softly*) Nora!

The curtain falls.

“This change I myself, in the letter to my translator, stigmatise as 'barbaric violence' done to the play. Those who make use of the altered scene do so entirely against my wish.”
– Henrik Ibsen

SUMMARY OF *A DOLL'S HOUSE*

ACT I

The play opens on the day before Christmas. Nora returns home from shopping; although her husband is anticipating a promotion and raise, he still chides her excessive spending. In response, Nora flirts, pouts, and cajoles her husband as a child might, and, indeed, Torvald addresses her as he might a child. He hands her more money but only after berating her spending. Their relationship parallels that of a daughter and father and, indeed, is exactly like the relationship Nora had with her father. Early in this act the audience is aware that the relationship between the Helmers is based on dishonesty when Nora denies that she has eaten macaroons, knowing that her husband has forbidden her to do so.

Nora is visited by an old friend, Kristine Linde. Mrs. Linde tells Nora that she has had some problems and is seeking employment. Nora confesses to Mrs. Linde that she, too, has been desperate and recounts that she had been forced to borrow money several years earlier when her husband was ill. The money was necessary to finance a trip that saved her husband's life, but Nora forged her father's signature to secure the loan and lied to Torvald that her father had given them the money. Thus, she has been deceiving her husband for years as she worked to repay the loan. She tells this story to Mrs. Linde to demonstrate that she is an adult who is capable of both caring for her family and conducting business. Unfortunately, Nora's secret is shared by Krogstad, an employee at Torvald's bank. After a confrontation with Krogstad, Torvald decides to fire Krogstad and hire Mrs. Linde in his place.

Krogstad threatens Nora, telling her that if he loses his job he will reveal her earlier dishonesty. Krogstad fails to understand that Nora has no influence with her husband, nor does he appreciate the level of dishonesty that characterizes the Helmer marriage. For her part, Nora cannot believe that forging her father's signature – an act that saved her husband's life – could lead to a serious punishment. Still, she is concerned enough to plead Krogstad's cause with Torvald. Torvald refuses to reconsider firing Krogstad and forbids Nora to even mention his name.

ACT II

Mrs. Linde stops by to help Nora prepare for a costume ball. Nora explains to Mrs. Linde that Krogstad is blackmailing her about the earlier loan. After Nora again begs Torvald not to fire Krogstad, her husband sends Krogstad an immediate notice of his dismissal. Nora is desperate and decides to ask help of Dr. Rank, a family friend. Before she can ask him for his help, Dr. Rank makes it obvious that he is in love with her and Nora determines that because of this it would be unwise to ask his help. Krogstad visits Nora once again and this time leaves a

letter for Torvald in which Nora's dishonesty is revealed. To divert Torvald's attention from the mailbox, Nora elicits his help with her practice of the dance she is to perform, the tarantella. Finally, Nora asks Torvald to promise that he will not read the mail until after the party.

ACT III

Krogstad had years earlier been in love with Mrs. Linde. At the beginning of this act they agree to marry, and Krogstad offers to retrieve his letter from Torvald. However, Mrs. Linde disagrees and thinks that it is time that Nora is forced to confront the dishonesty in her marriage. After the party, the Helmers return home and Torvald reads the letter from Krogstad. While Torvald reads in his study, Nora pictures herself as dead, having committed suicide by drowning in the icy river. Torvald interrupts her fantasy by demanding that she explain her deception. However, he refuses to listen and is only concerned with the damage to his own reputation. Torvald's focus on his own life and his lack of appreciation for the suffering undergone by Nora serve to open her eyes to her husband's faults. She had been expecting Torvald to rescue her and protect her, and instead he only condemns her and insists that she is not a fit mother to their children. At that moment another letter arrives from Krogstad telling the Helmers that he will not take legal action against Nora. Torvald is immediately appeased and is willing to forget the entire episode. But having seen her husband revealed as a self-centered, selfish, hypocrite, Nora tells him that she can no longer live as a doll and expresses her intention to leave the house immediately. Torvald begs her to stay, but the play ends with Nora leaving the house, her husband, and her children.

HELMER: First and foremost, you are a wife and mother.

NORA: That I don't believe any more. I believe that first and foremost I am an individual, just as you are.

- *A Doll's House* (Part 1)

(i) Source: encyclopedia.com

ABOUT HENRIK IBSEN

A BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO IBSEN

Name: Henrik Johan Ibsen

Also known as: The Father of Modern Drama, The Father of Realism

Born: 20 March 1828 (Skein, Norway)

Died: 23 May, 1906 (Oslo, Norway - known as Kristiania at the time)

Genre: Realism

Notable works: *Peer Gynt*, *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Hedda Gabler*, *The Master Builder*

His career in a sentence: Ibsen wrote over 25 plays, developing from an early period influenced by folk tales, through several plays that attack society's entrenched beliefs, through to a later focus on psychological realism.

“There is always a risk in being alive, and if you are more alive, there is more risk.”
– Henrik Ibsen

“A woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society, with laws framed by men and with a judicial system that judges feminine conduct from a masculine point of view.”
– Henrik Ibsen

“To live is to war with trolls.”
– Henrik Ibsen

Some useful facts:

- He's the second most-performed playwright in the world (after Shakespeare).
- He's known for his 'problem plays', which examine contentious issues through realistic interactions between characters. Some examples to remember: women's lives (*A Doll's House*), sexually transmitted diseases (*Ghosts*), and morality in his time (*An Enemy of the People*).
- He was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature three times: 1902, 1903 and 1904, losing to Theodor Mommsen, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson and, finally, both Frédéric Mistral and José Echegaray.
- Characters in his plays are often based on and even named after members of his family. Jon Gynt in *Peer Gynt*, Old Ekdahl in *The Wild Duck* and Daniel Hejre in *The League of Youth* are all considered to be modelled on his father, Knud.
- Despite his focus on morality, he was something of a cad himself. The character of Hilda in *The Master Builder* is based on three separate women; Ibsen had an affair with two.
- His last word, “Tvertimod”, was his response to a nurse who told a guest that he was getting better. Translation: “On the contrary”.
- His son, Sigurd, went on to become Prime Minister of Norway.
- Ibsen believed that there is no better way to tackle contemporary issues than a strict focus on realism and interpersonal psychology.

(i) Source: National Theatre UK <http://statetheatrecompany.com.au/content/uploads/2017/06/A-Dolls-House-pre-show-notes.pdf>

GLOSSARY

AGGRANDIZE	to enhance the power, wealth, position, or reputation of
ANIMOSITY	a strong feeling of dislike or hatred
BEHOLDEN	being under obligation for a favor or gift; indebted
BOARDING HOUSE	a lodging house at which meals are provided
CHASTISE	to censure severely
CLERK	an official responsible (as to a government agency) for correspondence, records, and accounts
CONDESCENSION	patronizing attitude or behavior
CONSUMPTION	a progressive wasting away of the body especially from pulmonary tuberculosis
CORROBORATE	to support with evidence or authority; make more certain
DESTITUTE	lacking possessions and resources; suffering extreme poverty
DOTE	to be lavish or excessive in one's attention, fondness, or affection
EPIPHANY	an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure
FJORD	a narrow inlet of the sea between cliffs or steep slopes
FLITTING	moving in an erratic fluttering manner
FORGERY	the crime of falsely and fraudulently making or altering a document
HEROINE	the principal female character in a literary or dramatic work
LIVELIHOOD	means of support or subsistence
NOMAD	an individual who roams about; a member of a people who have no fixed residence
PASTOR	a clergyman serving a local church or parish
PONTIFICATE	to speak or express opinions in a pompous or dogmatic way

GLOSSARY (Cont)

PRECARIOUS	dependent on uncertain premises; dubious
PSEUDONYM	a fictitious name; a pen name
PUBLIC RECORD	a record made by a public officer or a government agency
RECONCILIATION	the act of restoring friendship or harmony
RETRACT	to recant or disavow something
SANITARIUM	an institution for rest and recuperation
SYPHILIS	a sexually transmitted disease, much more common in earlier times
SPITEFUL	filled with or showing petty ill will or hatred
VOID	of no legal force or effect; null

(i) source: merriamwebster.com

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Though the play is technically set in 1894 (15 years after the original was written in 1879), how is it clearly a very contemporary play?
2. Nora's decision to leave her family was scandalous in 1879; but it would still be viewed as a controversial choice today. Why is it so challenging for us to imagine a mother leaving her children?
3. Lucas Hnath has said he was inspired to make Nora successful and happy after hearing so many people speculate that she would likely have had quite a sad and desperate life. What could have easily been Nora's plight given her moment in history?
4. Torvald wearily asks why it has to be so hard to just be with people. Why are relationships of any kind, let alone marriages, indeed so difficult?
5. Does Nora have a right to be disappointed in Emmy's choices for herself? Can she know for sure that Emmy will ultimately have the same experience Nora did of marriage?
6. Nora repeatedly makes a prediction that in 20 or 30 years, marriage will cease to exist. Clearly it hasn't. Why do you think marriage as an institution has persisted way beyond this predicted expiry date?
7. Emmy suggests that the world her mother is wanting would leave us all living like nomads. What's the danger of this reality? Why do we have trouble resisting the idea of monogamy?
8. Are there some dreams and goals in a person's life that are worth whatever sacrifices they require? Was Nora's one of those? What would be one in your own life?
9. What future do you predict for Torvald after the play's end? Will this visit from Nora change him or his approach to life? Or will he continue as he had been?
10. Emmy speaks a bit about her older brothers Bob and Iver. How does the age a child is at when something major happens in their life effect how they're able to process and live with it? How would the scene between Nora and her child have gone very differently if Nora had instead been talking to one of her sons?
11. Nora claims that she is her best self when she is by herself. Do you believe that some people are simply better suited to being in relationships and some people are truly better off on their own? What would account for that difference?
12. Nora points out to Emmy that a lot of the wrong that happens in the world simply comes down to "bad ideas." What are some bad ideas that we've had as a society throughout history? What are some that we may have right now?
13. What do you see as the future of human romantic relationships? How tied to technological developments (reproductive ones, for instance) will these changes be?
14. Despite the many advancements in women's rights over the past centuries, in what ways are we still – in 2018 – grappling with gender inequality?
15. Ibsen said that "*The strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone.*" Do you think Nora is strong or selfish?

(i) SOURCE: Adapted from MTC Study Guide to *Once*.

ABOUT THE SEGAL CENTRE FOR PERFORMING ARTS

The Segal Centre for Performing Arts is a not-for-profit theatre company dedicated to nurturing, producing and presenting world-class English-language theatre and to showcasing the best professional artists from Montreal and beyond. A part of the community since 1967, the organization was reborn in 2007 as the Segal and has expanded to become a nationally recognized venue for the performing arts with a focus on creation, innovation, diversity, and cross-cultural collaborations. Driven by a belief in the power of the arts to strengthen and connect communities, the Segal's programming emphasizes original interpretations of popular classic and contemporary works, new Canadian musicals and engaging productions with universal appeal.