



LOCAL EVENTS

More than 100 years later, Ibsen's 'Doll House' gets a sequel in Lean Ensemble production

BY NANCY K. WELLARD SPECIAL TO THE ISLAND PACKET/ THE BEAUFORT GAZETTE
 UPDATED JANUARY 25, 2019 7:23 PM



A scene for Lean Ensemble's production of "A Doll's House, Part 2." JEAN-MARIE COTE SPECIAL TO THE ISLAND PACKET/ THE BEAUFORT GAZETTE

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"I must decline the honor of being said to have worked for the Women's Rights movement. I am not even sure what Women's Rights are. To me it has been a question of human rights." Henrik Ibsen

"A Doll's House, Part 2," a production of the Lean Ensemble, which opened Thursday evening at the Main Street Theatre, begins with a knocking on a door. The same door, as it turns out, that was dramatically and forcefully closed fifteen years earlier, when Nora Helmer, a ripping feminist, left her husband and children — and the security of her Norwegian home — to escape the stifling rules of society, gender inequality, and more to the point, her own rigid, suffocating marriage.

The year was 1897, and the production was "A Doll's House" by the playwright Henrik Ibsen. Audiences of that early day followed those societal issues and noted their impact on the complicated characters in this remarkable piece.

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Now, more than 100 years later, playwright, Lucas Hnath continues Nora's story. We note the effects on Nora, (Peggy Trecker-White), Torvald (J. Richey Nash), Emmy (Taylor Harvey) and Anne Marie (Jenny Zmarzly) through his award winning sequel, written in 2017.

Hnath's award-winning script will absorb you from start to finish. His storyline is absolutely on the mark. If you've seen the earlier Ibsen play, it will add a layer to your response. If you haven't, it is of no consequence in terms of your enjoyment of this production .

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Hnath's plotline is focused and specific. He presents Nora Helmer, re-entering the family home. Her visit is not for old time's sake, but to negotiate a legal document she must secure in order to continue the life she is living and to maintain the recognition and wealth she has achieved on her own. She has, over time, written several books, most dealing with women's issues. One, most especially, is almost autobiographical in which she points out the distractions of married life, and which clearly contributed to her decision to walk out, leaving everything and everyone behind.

The play's action is established when Nora explains to Anne Marie why she has returned, and that she hopes to involve her in bringing about a legal divorce from her husband, Torvald, father of their children. He is a prominent member of the community and a bank officer. Remember that in 1897 Norway, it is illegal for a married woman to conduct business.

Everything takes place in the stunningly bare living room. Nora takes on Torvald, Anne Marie and, Emmy individually. Their names are projected dramatically against an enormous blank living room wall. The rich script offers Nora the opportunity of presenting her position as it relates to her decision to leave everything and everybody, while, at the same time, providing the three an opportunity to offer their sense of what has happened to them as a result of her departure.

I felt myself periodically leaning in favor of each and everyone. These four actors, under the direction of Blake White, offered the richest characterizations and the most staggering performances. Again, the script, the direction, the actors, the strikingly minimal set, and the detail of the period costumes all contributed impressively to the stylish elaboration of this one-act, 90-minute play which will involve you in ways you cannot imagine.

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What: A Doll's House, Part 2
Where: Main Street Theatre, 3000 Main St., Hilton Head Island
When: Jan. 24 – 27 and 31; Feb. 1-3
For more information: Call 843 715 6676 or visit leanensemble.org

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BY KARL PUCKETT
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