

Welcome to this introduction to **A Doll's House**, by Henrik Ibsen, in a new version by Anya Reiss. It has been directed by Joe Hill-Gibbins.

The audio described performance is on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May at 2pm with a touch tour at 12pm. The production lasts for approximately 2 hours and 35 minutes including a 15-minute interval. The first half is 1 hour and 25 minutes and the second is 40 minutes. The audio describers are Jenny Stewart Cosgrove and Miranda Yates.

Please note - this production includes strong language, including misogynistic language; depictions of mental illness including discussion of suicide; drug abuse and discussions of addiction and relapse; sexual content; references to parental death, terminal illness and war. This production also includes flashing lights and the smoking of herbal cigarettes.

There is an ethnically diverse cast of five: two women and three men. The costumes worn reflect present day trends.

**Nora Helmer** is a white woman in her late thirties. She is of medium height with a slim, athletic figure. Her long, straight, honey blonde hair falls around her shoulders or is tied back in a smooth, low ponytail. She has blue eyes and a make-up free sun kissed complexion. Her clothes are expensive but casual. Wide legged, blue denim jeans, worn with a white long sleeved cotton top and a fine knit, stone coloured oversized jumper with elbow length bell sleeves. Later she changes into grey trousers with a thick stripe of cream up the outer leg and a black-fitted polo-neck and at one point she adds a loose-fitting denim shirt. A gold wedding ring and diamond solitaire glint on her left hand. She is never far from her smartphone which is usually protruding from the back pocket of her trousers. Nora is a frenetic blend of coquettish femininity and extreme tension, flitting from one to the other in rapid succession. She lounges or crawls on the floor biting her lower lip, eyes wide with invitation, or paces back and forth wringing her hands or repeats a gesture of pleading, palms flat, arms extended, a slightly manic smile on her face. She is consciously tactile, actively choosing to touch or embrace others. Nora skulls wine as though it were water and is rarely still. For a fancy dress party she dresses in a sexy nurse costume made of shiny purple material, it has a barely modest, extremely short skirt that flares out with

layers of net, a white pinny is fixed to the front with a medical cross emblem in purple and a big bow at the back. The sleeves are capped and have white lace ruffles around their edges. She teams it with white stay-up stockings with purple bow garters and white stilettos. Nora is mother to two young children that we never meet though we hear the voice of one of them over a baby monitor that has a tiny red power light.

Nora's husband **Torvald Helmner** is a white man in his mid-forties. His short dark hair is slightly shaggy and greying at the temples, it frames a sharp featured, clean-shaven face, with thin lips and watchful brown eyes. Torvald's clothes are casual and give him a slightly younger looking "Hipster" air. Low slung dark denim jeans are worn with marl grey T-shirts under slightly loose-fitting cardigans, first a mud brown mohair, then a chocolate brown with a fawn front, patterned in orange and brown splodges. For fancy dress he wears a black hoodie with a white skeleton design on the front. He has a diamond ring on his wedding finger, a fine silver chain around his neck and a smart watch on his right wrist. Torvald has a boyish energy seemingly putty in his wife's hands but when crossed he is determined, his posture becomes rigid, he slices the air with the side of his palm in a gesture of challenge and resolute authority.

**Petter Rank** is an old friend from the couples university days. In his early forties he is tall, well-built Black man. His light brown skin is unshaven, peppered with dark stubble. He has brooding brown eyes in a round face and a slight widows peak at the front of his short cut black hair. At ease in the Helmer house, his relaxed demeanor is mirrored in his laid-back smile. He is physically affectionate towards Nora pushing the boundary of friendship by coiling his arms around her waist, resting his cheek on hers, letting his hand linger on her neck for a just a moment too long. He is dressed quite smartly in caramel tailored trousers topped with a light tan turtleneck that clings to his chunky figure. He has a gold ring and bracelet on his right wrist and a gold chain around his neck. Later he changes his top for a long-sleeved black T-shirt and adds a caramel suit jacket to match the trousers. He carries a packet of cigarettes in his trouser pocket and wear black leather shoes.

**Kristine Linde** is also a friend from university days. Fallen on tough times she

arrives at the Helmer's in a disheveled state. In her late thirties she is tall and very slim. She is a mixed heritage woman with light brown skin, soulful brown eyes, and a fine-featured face. Her black hair is loosely twisted back in a messy bun. On first meeting Kristine is scruffily dressed in a mishmash of clothes that appear begged and borrowed and are most certainly well-worn. She is swamped by an oversized olive green, padded coat which she takes off to reveal baggy, coffee-coloured trousers, topped with a shapeless black, long sleeved tunic style sweatshirt. She has a black jumper tied around her waist and a pair of tan suede mules on her feet. Later, Kristine changes into some clothes borrowed from Nora, an expensive, loose fitting, lounge set of soft grey wool slacks and a matching polo-neck. She moves with a calm rhythm that belies a taut self-consciousness which is present in her strained smile, or as her hand nervously smoothes her hair, and in the way she touches her chin with the tips of her fingers as she listens to others.

**Nils Krogstad** was also at university at the same time but could not be described as an old friend. A tall, medium build white man in his early forties. His pasty face is framed by greying, slightly greasy hair pushed into a side parting. His dark beard has patches of grey and his tired blue eyes squint with anger behind metal framed square glasses. He is dressed in a cheap black two-piece suit worn with a light grey shirt and tie and black leather shoes. Over this he adds a nut-brown raincoat and a wool scarf striped in neutral tones. He clutches a black, soft leather briefcase gripping it so tightly his knuckles are white. Nils paces with frustration, his gestures uncontrolled as his anger bubbles over.

The stage is open to us as a wide, modern interior that feels like the lower-ground floor of a large, expensive apartment, open, minimalist, and carefully designed. It stretches across the full 18 metre width of the space with the stage floor raised about a metre higher than the front stalls seating. The floor is covered entirely in a pristine pale cream carpet that gives it a soft, luxurious feel, while the natural tone and texture of the theatre's curved brick wall at the back, cuts through the otherwise polished, uniformity.

A couple of metres in from either side, the space is framed by tall modern walls each about six metres wide and angled slightly inward. Behind them a gap runs up to the

brick wall, creating the sense of corridors or adjoining rooms. Large openings are cut into the lower halves of both walls, just over 5 metres wide and about 3 metres in height. The gap on the left is fully open whilst on the right it's edged along the bottom forming a shallow step.

There are two ways onto the stage: a short set of steps at the front on the left that's reached by passing along the left stalls aisle. The second is a door in the left of the brick wall at the back. Those coming in this way climb a short set of steps up to stage level, and to the right of the door is a video entry phone.

A feature in the architecture to the right of the door creates a raised ledge about 50 centimetres higher than the floor and about a metre deep. It runs continuously around the back, all the way to the front edge on the right and is covered in the same carpet as the floor.

Above the space, in the same cream tone, a sloping ceiling rests on the walls, angled so that it dips lower towards the back, where it finishes about four metres above the floor. Set into its centre is a large glowing lightbox, mirroring the ceiling's shape - narrower at the back and widening towards the front. Like a stylised skylight, it casts a soft light that shifts in tone and intensity to reflect the unfolding story.

At first the space feels newly occupied, clean and sparse. Expensive white goods hint at its wealthy occupants: on the raised level at the back on the right is a large white American-style fridge freezer, while against the brick wall on the far left is a high end white washer-dryer.

The only sign of life is a large mound of new goods in the centre of the room, an array of shopping bags and boxes – with brand names like Selfridges, Hamleys, Waitrose, Lego, and Liberty spilling across the floor. The largest item is a plastic-wrapped Christmas tree, around ten feet tall, lying on its side, and leaning up at the back are several other boxes, the largest belonging to a new seventy-two-inch TV set.

### **Cast and Production Credits.**

Nora Helmer by **Romola Garai**

Torvald Helmer by **Tom Mothersdale**

Petter Rank by **Olivier Huban**

Kristine Linde by **Thalissa Teixeira ta-lissa tay-shay-ru h**

And Nils Krogstad by **James Corrigan**

The Set Design is by **Haemi Shin**

With Costume by **Alex Lowde**

The Sound Design is by **Gareth Fry**

And Lighting is by **Lee Curran**

A Doll's House was originally written by **Henrik Ibsen**.

This production has been adapted by **Anya Reiss** and directed by **Joe Hill-Gibbins**.

This is the end of the introduction to A Doll's House at the Almeida Theatre. If you have any questions or need further assistance please contact the box office on 020 7359 4404 or email [access@almeida.co.uk](mailto:access@almeida.co.uk).