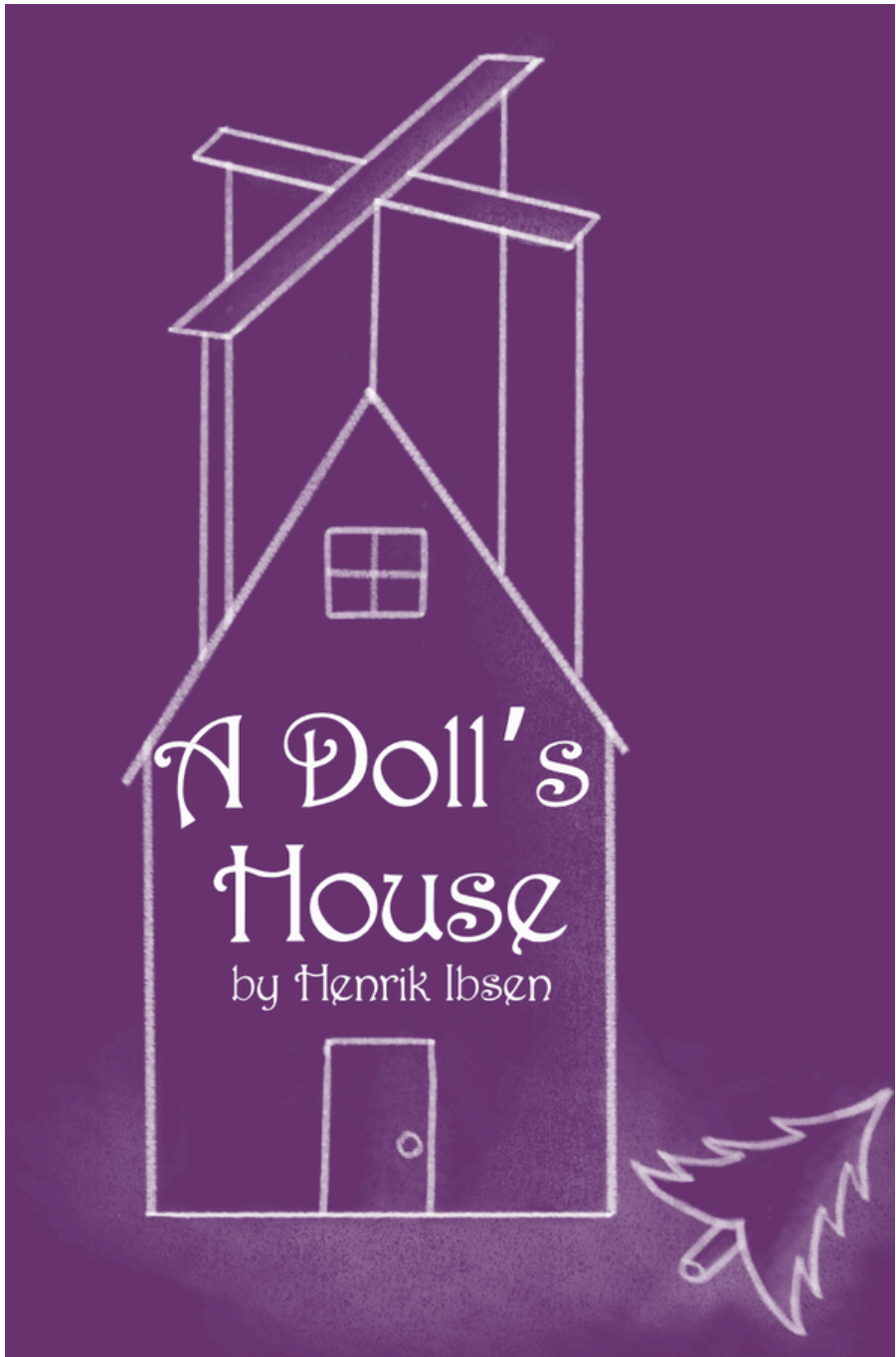


Keswick Theatre Club presents



Theatre By The Lake Studio - November 2025

The Play

A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen was first published in Copenhagen in 1879.

We are premièring a new translation from the original by Jocelyn Pye, by permission of Rare Vision Scripts : scripts@rarevision.co.uk

Our production is set in a northern European town towards the end of the nineteenth century, where some are clinging on to patriarchal privilege while all around the seeds are being sown for momentous social change.

All the action takes place inside the Helmers' fashionable first-floor apartment, but the world outside makes its presence felt in the many comings and goings.

Act 1 : Christmas Eve, morning

Act 2 : Christmas Day, afternoon

Act 3 : Boxing Day, around midnight

There will be an interval in the middle of Act 2

Persons of the play, in order of appearance:

A porter and street musician

Helene, the Helmers' maid

Anne-Marie, the Helmers' nanny who also raised Nora

Nora Helmer, a housewife

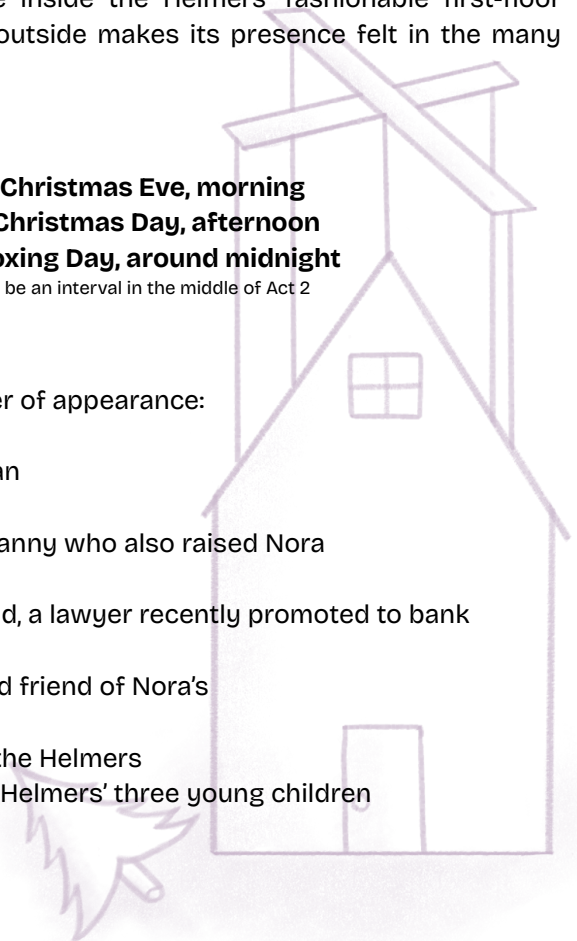
Torvald Helmer, her husband, a lawyer recently promoted to bank director

Christine Linde, a childhood friend of Nora's

Nils Krogstad, a lawyer

Dr Rank, a family friend of the Helmers

Ivar, Bobby and Emmy, the Helmers' three young children



The Interview

with Jocelyn Pye - director and translator

Why did you choose to direct this play?

I was immediately gripped when I first read *A Doll's House*. Here was a play addressing the problem of coercive control - which we are only beginning to define and understand - from over 140 years ago. It manages to weave complex layers of interpretation while also hurtling us towards the simplest, most daring of endings. I am excited by the way it foreshadows existentialism – the challenge to take responsibility for our own choices – and confronts us with the enormous personal cost of claiming the freedom to do so.

***A Doll's House* is one of the most performed plays world-wide with many existing translations. Why do yet another translation?**

The short answer is that I wanted to know for myself how Ibsen had his characters speak. The play feels so modern, yet when reading the older English translations, I was constantly tripping over niceties and dated phrases that seemed to get in the way of the characters' expression. When I got hold of a copy of the original I was struck by how directly they spoke to each other, and I wanted to reinstate that. In addition, having our own translation of a work that is already in the public domain gives us so much more freedom in the creative process.

Reams of pages have been written to analyse & review the play which was revolutionary in its time. Does it have relevance today?

Yes it does, and indeed it is still revolutionary today. Women may have since gained more rights, but all over the world individuals and groups are still trapped in oppressive situations. The play shows us that the way to hope is through courage, and that one person's courage can inspire another's.

What was the biggest challenge translating from old Dano-Norwegian into English?

Finding enough hours in the day!

What is your favourite thing about the play?

The concept of the 'most wondrous thing' (*det vidunderligste*). For me it sums up the faith that the play expresses in human capacity for change.

The Cast



NORA - Fleur Wady

Favourite line : 'I believe I'm first and foremost a human being, the same as you – or at least I'm going to try to become one'.

TORVALD - Paul Davies

Favourite line: 'On the contrary, I feel extremely lively!'



CHRISTINE - Annabel Hossell

Favourite line : 'Thanks for the light'.

DR RANK - Bill Bewley

Favourite line : 'I really don't know what would have become of me if I'd never come into this house'.



NILS KROGSTAD - Len Wainwright

Favourite line : 'Under the ice perhaps?'

ANNE-MARIE - Leonora Deasy

Favourite thing : Loved all the fun & games at the rehearsals. Such spirited dedication!



HELENE - Eleanor Paxon

Biggest challenge : Popping in and out in character with a couple of lines whenever the door bell rings

MUSICIAN & PORTER - Graham Kendall

Favourite thing: the journey of emotions drawn out by the new translation that's wonderfully portrayed by the actors



The Youth Cast



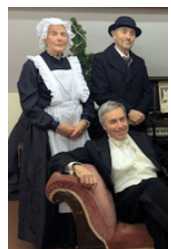
We are proud to have once again included a youth cast in our show by partnering with Keswick School. From playing the roles of Nora's children to devising the personified letterbox, the energy and creativity brought by the young theatre-makers has been wonderful.

EMMY - Lou Lou Simpson & Madison Palmer

BOB - Thomas Rothwell & Harry Miles

IVAR - Keeley Robinson, Anya Greenwoods & Freya Proctor

THE LETTERBOX (& assistant youth cast directors) Curtis Berry, Megan Carter, Mahi Madani, Freya Proctor & Evie Rolls



Dancing, Banking, Women's

A smørgasbord of historical contexts

- 1824 'O Tannenbaum' [O Fir-Tree] by Ernst Anschütz; now a popular Christmas carol, it was originally a folk song about the faithfulness symbolised by evergreen trees.
- 1840s onwards The Tarantella, a south European folk dance with origins ranging from spiritual trance to a cure for spider bites, is appropriated in north European ballrooms as a gendered courtship display.
- 1845 Publication of 'The Red Shoes', by Hans Christian Andersen, the story of a poverty-stricken girl entranced and tormented by magic dancing shoes.
- 1848 The first Norwegian commercial bank opens in Christiania (Oslo); by 1875 there are eleven. Banking in Norway becomes increasingly focused on commercial loans as industrial investment grows.
- 1848 Publication of an image of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert celebrating Christmas with a decorated fir tree popularises the custom in Britain.
- 1875 The Norwegian parliament decides to abolish the currency of talers and shillings. 'The monetary unit shall be a krone, divided into 100 øre.'
- 1870-80s Christmas trees beginning to be accepted in Norway as part of Christian celebrations.
- 1879 A Doll's House first published in Copenhagen and staged there in December in a sell-out run.



Betty Hennings -
the first Nora

Rights and Christmas Trees

- for Ibsen's play and our production

1880 In the German première of *A Doll's House*, the leading actress demands a softer ending where Nora stays at home; Ibsen calls it 'a barbaric outrage'.

1882 *A Doll's House* is translated into English by British women's rights activist, Henrietta Frances Lord.



1884 Founding of the Norwegian Association for Women's Rights.

1888 Married women in Norway gain legal rights over their own property and income.

1889 British premiere of *A Doll's House* at the Novelty Theatre in London, translated by William Archer.

1889 'The Red Flag', anthem of the British Labour movement later sung to the tune of 'O Tannenbaum', is published in the newspaper of the Social Democratic Federation.

1913 Unanimous vote in Norwegian parliament in favour of universal suffrage for men and women.

1928 The Equal Franchise Act gave women equal voting rights with men in the UK.

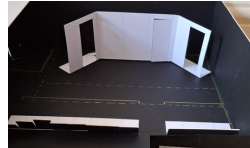
1925-43 Mussolini's dictatorship in Italy attempts to control and standardise folk dance traditions such as the Tarantella, suppressing individualistic expression.



Peek behind the scenes...

Creating a set for a production is a bit like assembling a giant puzzle. Our design brief was to make a 'beautiful construct'. In Ibsen's words, the play is set in a 'tastefully but not expensively furnished' living room. At the same time, we did not want that room to fill the entire stage but to have visible edges – a sign that, as Nora comes to realise, this home is not the entire world.

The decorated model on the right is one of the incarnations of our "what if we tried this?" iterations.



set model Eleanor Paxton

Some ideas worked brilliantly, others... not so much. Watching it evolve from sketches to models to the real thing has been a joy – and a reminder that every item, prop and backdrop has a story of its own.

Deciding on a chaise was a significant moment for us, and then began the hunt. We finally found one, along with matching armchairs. After a 200 mile round trip with it all packed into the back of a Citroen Grand Picasso, we were able see our vision become reality.



Another challenge was the stove. the hearth of the Helmers' home - our inspiration were the beautiful tiled Scandinavian stoves - kakelugn -and hey presto... our wish was granted...

stove - Eleanor Paxton

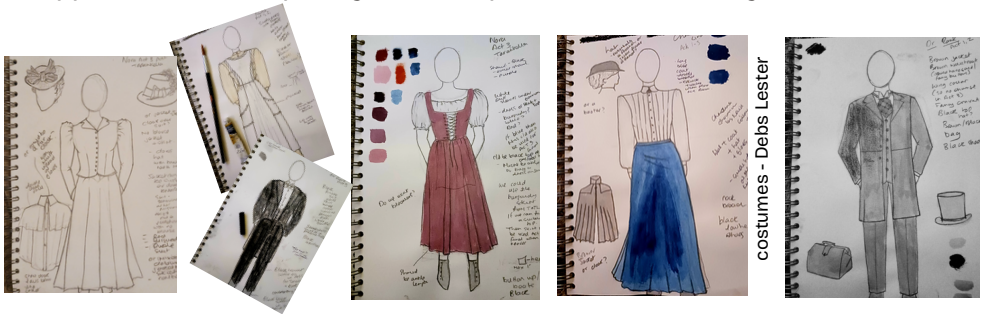


We chose the iconic Arts and Crafts wallpaper design by William Morris, 'Strawberry Thief', because it echoes one of Torvald's pet names for Nora - 'my little songbird' - surrounding her with it in controlling but also subversive ways.



Peek behind the scenes...

Then there's costumes — where discussions, drawings & sketches turned into reality. Seeing a design go from beautiful drawings to a costume that actors can move, dance, and lounge about in is so satisfying. Along the way, there were tweaks, adjustments, and a hunt for the smallest details, all with the aim of bringing the characters to life. You'll see we chose traditional costume design as worn circa 1890s, as opposed to contemporary or steam punk which we briefly flirted with.



We knew we wanted a piano. It had to not dominate or be a nightmare to hoist onto the set, and we thought it would help convey the tasteful Helmer home. When one was kindly donated to the club, we trundled it along the road on a busy Saturday, and in three days it was transformed into a stage-ready prop for Nora's Tarantella.



For our music we chose three enduring folk melodies:
O Tannenbaum (Oh Christmas Tree) for its theme of faithfulness in hard times; **The Tarantella** - the Italian dance whose history encapsulates the tension between control and freedom; & **Bella Ciao** for its evocation of courageous resistance that Ibsen helped inspire into the future

And of course, there are the people behind it all — the cast and crew who make the magic happen. From play reading, to auditions, to rehearsals, to last-minute prop improvisations, each person has poured creativity, humour, and a bit of their own personality into every corner of the production. It's this teamwork that transforms ideas and intentions into something we are proud to show you.

The Creative Team

Director & Translator : Jocelyn Pye

Producer, assistant director, publicity : Karen Ray

Wardrobe : Debs Lester & Eleanor Paxon

Set design & build : Graham Kendall, Debs Lester, Eleanor Paxon, Paul Paxon, Jocelyn Pye, Karen Ray

Props : Debs Lester, Eleanor Paxon, Jocelyn Pye, Karen Ray

Music : Graham Kendall, Jocelyn Pye

Sound effects : Graham Kendall, Jocelyn Pye & Curtis Berry

Stage tech : Theatre by the Lake

It takes a community to make a play

Our very special thanks to :

Theo Pye-Kendall : Poster image

Babs & Kevin : piano

Vintage of Keswick : props

Penrith Players : costume

KAOS : costume

Grasmere Players : costume

Paul Martin : rehearsal & set build support

Keswick Photographic Society : photography

Norma Nicholson and Alison Pond for their generously volunteered time
and skill chaperoning the youth cast

Keswick School Drama Department for support setting up the youth
cast and providing rehearsal space

Youth cast parents for their encouragement and logistical support

Paula Nixon at Cumberland Council for safeguarding advice

Nick Hampton : set transport

The front of house volunteers at Theatre by the Lake

Daymon Johnstone, Claire Dunk, Rachel Price & the Front of House
team at Theatre by the Lake

And thanks to our programme sponsors : Adventure Hunter, Bill &
Wendy Bewley, Paul Davies, Fit n' Active Drama Group Cockermouth,
Paul Martin, Mobile Adventure, Paul & Eleanor Paxon, Jocelyn Pye, Karen
Ray, Helen Reed, David H. Ross.

Our Next Production



LOVE & OTHER MISUNDERSTANDINGS

WED 8 - SAT 11 APRIL 2026

Keswick Theatre Club brings you three short plays by
Chekhov, Feydeau and G.B. Shaw.

Join us as we delve into the imaginations of these classic
European playwrights to explore the frailties of the human heart.

This is a great opportunity for you to get involved with Keswick Theatre Club. Each short play is to be directed by a different director with plenty of support from the club - perfect for new directors or those short on time. Actors, stage managers, musicians, designers, we want to meet you! Please get in touch: secretary@keswicktheatreclub.org.uk.

About Keswick Theatre Club

We are a group of people who all love creating theatre.

New members are always welcome.

No experience required - everyone's experience is valued.

There are many ways for members to get involved :

Play readings - enjoy reading a play out loud together

Play group - social meetings to chat about plays

Workshops

Acting

Directing

Set design

Wardrobe

Marketing

Lighting design

Stage management

Sound design and live music



Keswick Theatre
Club

keswicktheatreclub.org.uk

Chinty's newsletter

Contact : secretary@keswicktheatreclub.org.uk



There's more of
our research &
inspiration here ..



Keswick Theatre Club

*A Doll's House
Resource Hub*