



# Ibsen's 'A Doll's House' illustrates women's status

**KANSAS CITY  
ACTORS THEATRE**

Henrik Ibsen's 1879 play, "A Doll's House" displays the conditions of women in Norway whose status certainly lagged far behind that of their husband, professionally and socially as evidenced in the opening moments of the play.



Mike Tsai/Kansas City Actors Theatre

Step back into the home of a Norwegian banker, Torvald Helmer and his wife, Nora as "A Doll's House" takes the audience into revolutionary battle of women's rights and possibly the birth of Humanism. Ibsen's play depicts a society where women were

treated as a child, a toy, and as a possession. Women were charged with keeping the house, raising the children, and caring for others, but all tasks were basically domestic. Top priority: keep hubby happy.

In “A Doll’s House” Nora finds herself caught in a trap and stresses how to manipulate to free herself of a burden she created in an effort to save her husband. Nora’s father is dying, yet her husband needs a warmer climate to recover from his own illness. So, Nora leaves her father’s bedside to escape to Italy for a year so her husband can recover his health.



Mike Tsai/Kansas City Actors Theatre

To fund the year abroad, Nora secures a large sum of money in a deceitful way and hides all information from her husband, Torvald. As time progresses, Nora scrimps, pilfers, and saves for installments to cover her debt without Torvald’s knowledge. As the play progresses, the web tightens and conditions change. The entanglements create the tension and cause Nora to make choices and find strength from within.

A spectacular cast demonstrated quality and texture in “A Doll’s House” as Ibsen’s main characters all evolve as the play progresses. Hillary Clemens and Todd Lanker portray Nora and Torvald as a couple distantly divided. Lanker plays

Torvald as a plastic, non-emotional, transparent banker, who concerns himself more with his stature than with reality. He treats his wife as a toy, a doll, and a plaything to provide his personal pleasure



Mike Tsai/Kansas City Actors Theatre

upon his whim. Lanker makes the character disliked from the opening scenes and finally builds the character to a fever-pitch in Act III.

As Norah, Hillary Clemens remains on-stage nearly the entire time and dominates each scene with her mastery and deliverance of the part. She goes from child to adult, from gay to frantic, from giddy to turbulent, from weak to strong as the play unfolds. Her character development is superb and powerful.

Blessed with a strong cast, the sub-plot slowly weaves into the main plot, creating added suspense and drama. Christina Schafer, Brian Paulette, and Tyler Alan Rowe, and Carla Noack provide insight into the past and the origin of the deed that could ruin the Helmer's social status. All provide interesting characters with a story to tell.



Mike Tsai/Kansas City Actors

Theatre

“A Doll’s House” shows that the idea of a woman’s place has changed over time, and this Ibsen piece might be one of the starting points for women to take charge of their lives and not merely serve at their husband’s pleasure. Nora shows she can be childlike, conniving, and determined. Her strength and character grows throughout the piece.

As always, KCAT produces high-caliber productions with a highlight on Kansas City talent. The productions are classic; the actors, outstanding; the performances riveting; the technical aspects, overwhelmingly good.



Mike Tsai/Kansas City Actors

Theatre

Opening night, Aug. 10 saw a full house. Curtain time for

performances is 7:30 p.m., but be aware by 6:45 a line already existed for seating. KCAT seating is by general admission, so come early for best seats. "A Doll's House" plays on City Stage in Union Station. More information on KCAT, "A Doll's House", and tickets can be found on the [KCAT website](#). The play continues through Aug. 25.

The cast is Hillary Clemens as Nora Helmer, Todd Lanker as Torvald Helmer, Carla Noack as Anne Marie, Christina Schafer as Kristine Linde, Drew Squire as Ivan Helmer, Aria Rose Smith as Emmy Helmer, Tyler Alan Rowe as Nils Krogstad, Brian Paulette as Dr. Rank.



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Henrik Ibsen's "A Doll's House" was adapted and directed by Darren Sextro who will follow this production with "A Doll's House Part II" later this season at The Unicorn Theatre, where the story picks up 15 years later. For that production, Sextro said that "A Doll's House, Part 2" has a different cast (of four) because it takes place 15 years after the ending of "A Doll's House." The two productions share director, dramaturg, scenic designer, costume designer, sound designer, and properties designer."



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Theatre

Members of Sextro's production team are Sarah M. Oliver, costume designer; Kelli Howard, scenic designer; Shane Rowse, lighting designer; David Kiehl, sound designer; Bill Christie, properties designer; Afton Earp, stage manager; Kyle Dyck, technical director; Tracy Turstriep, movement coach; Hannah Rogg Taylor, dramaturg; Colin Fowler, assistant stage manager; Jan Rogge, production manager; Paige Stallings, wardrobe mistress; Caroline Jackson, production intern; Matt Sameck, director of marketing and development; Dawn Youngs, business manager.

Tags: "A Doll's House" review, Kansas City Actors Theatre, KCAT, Union Station, Kansas City Theatre, Kansas City Performing Arts, Kansas City Arts & Entertainment