



Ibsen and Early Modernist Theatre, 1890-1900 (Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies)

Kirsten Shepherd-Barr

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Best known as the author of such plays as *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, Henrik Ibsen is one of the most influential figures of modern drama. This book takes Ibsen as a case study for an exploration of early modernist theatre in theory and practice, in text and performance. Modern drama has its roots in the theatrical activity across Europe during the 1880s and 1890s—the period when Ibsen's plays were first being produced in England and France, often by avant-garde or experimental theatrical groups. This study focuses on four of Ibsen's plays and their reception in England and France in the 1890s, specifically in the context of cross-cultural understanding, translation, and the diffusion of ideas. It encompasses performance history, textual and translation analysis in several languages, and theatrical criticism.

The main contribution of this study lies in the provision of a better understanding of Ibsen's central role in the radical artistic movements of the period, and particularly in locating the basis for an early modernist theatre in the new wave Ibsen created internationally. His immediate impact on the French Symbolist theatre movement, for example, meant that its avant-garde leaders embraced Ibsen's works as an important exposition of their own radical ideas. Through close cross-cultural exchange, plays like *Rosmersholm* and *The Master Builder*, which were heralded as explicitly symbolist in France, helped condition the critical reaction to Ibsen as a symbolist playwright in England as well, and directly influenced the development of the theatre in that direction, however briefly.

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