16 SEPTEMBER - 22 OCTOBER 2017

LEARNING RESOURCES

BELVOIR

Belvoir presents
Ghosts

Writer **HENRIK IBSEN**
Director **EAMON FLACK**

This production of *Ghosts* opened at Belvoir St Theatre on Wednesday 18 September 2017.
Set Designer **MICHAEL HANKIN**
Costume Designer **JULIE LYNCH**
Lighting Designer **NICK SCHLIEPER**
Composer & Sound Designer **STEFAN GREGORY**
Assistant Director **CARISSA LICCIARDELLO**
Production Manager **SALLY WITHNELL**
Technical Manager **AIDEN BRENNAN**
Stage Manager **LUKE McGETTIGAN**
Assistant Stage Manager **KAYTLIN PETRARCA**
Senior Technician **RAINE PAUL**

With
TOM CONROY
TAYLOR FERGUSON
ROBERT MENZIES
COLIN MOODY
PAMELA RABE

Ghosts is supported by the Nelson Meers Foundation

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Belvoir St Theatre is built. We also pay respect to the elders past and present.

BELVOIR

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Rehearsal Photos / Brett Boardman 2017
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Learning Resources compiled by Belvoir Education, September 2017

BELVOIR

ABOUT BELVOIR

One building.
Six hundred people.
Thousands of stories.

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner city Sydney.

Thirty years later, under Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Sue Donnelly, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

Belvoir Education

Our Education Program provides students and teachers with insights into the work of Belvoir and first hand experiences of the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education offers student workshops, teacher professional development workshops, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings and a wealth of online resources designed to support work in the drama classroom. Our arts access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work.

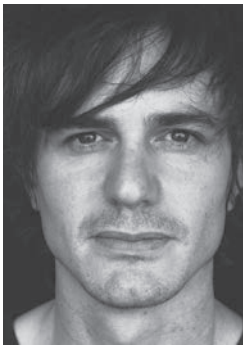
Explore our education pages at **www.belvoir.com.au/education**

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

EAMON FLACK
Director

TOM CONROY
Osvald Alving

TAYLOR FERGUSON
Regine Engstrand



STEFAN GREGORY
Composer & Sound Designer

MICHAEL HANKIN
Set Designer

CARISSA LICCIARDELLO
Assistant Director

JULIE LYNCH
Costume Designer

LUKE MCGETTIGAN
Stage Manager

ROBERT MENZIES
Pastor Manders

COLIN MOODY
Jacob Engstrand

KAYTLIN PETRARCA
Assistant Stage Manager

PAMELA RABE
Helene Alving

NICK SCHLIEPER
Lighting Designer

DIRECTOR AND ADAPTOR'S NOTE: EAMON FLACK

Ibsen's play was written and set in 1881. Our production isn't set in 1881 so much as set now in a room where nothing has changed since 1881. Think of the mind of Tony Abbott. I wouldn't date it precisely at 1881 but somewhere in that brain is a vortex into a past world where men knew best, marriage was a holy alliance, and the lives of others were to be ruthlessly constrained by the terrified, angry strictures of the faithful. Same with this play.

We may think that mean old world has passed, we may wish with all our hearts that it has, but then there comes, for example, the "national postal survey" on marriage equality and suddenly the dead walk again. Nothing has changed. Same with this play. Pastor Manders walks the earth still, issuing us, from the chilling pulpit of his own terrified inadequacy, with brutal instructions on how to love. We are never done with the past. It never goes away.

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Ibsen and his characters didn't know what the future was going to be. We do, because their future is our past. It really wasn't clear to Oswald or Mrs Alving or Pastor Manders or Henrik Ibsen if the things they believed in most would survive. What of their struggles might live on beyond them? It might be too late for them to save themselves, but they may, just may, strike into existence a new truth, a new ideal, which will be a life-buoy for a future Mrs Alving, a future Oswald, even a future Pastor Manders.

This is a play about learning to speak the truth, however we can. Sometimes we only find out how to when it is too late. But we must do it anyway. We must. We live for the future as much as for ourselves. The best we can do is redeem the struggles of people who came before us, so that the people who come after us get to live better lives than we do. Or at least lives as good as ours.

***

The play argues that not all people are going to get to live a good life. Some people will suffer. Some places will be shrouded in a fog of misery and injustice. In that sense it's really not a rosy-eyed play. It takes a tough view of life. It doesn't pretend life is an open book for everyone. But it also exhorts us to imagine what life and the world might be. Not in a megalomaniacal way – there's no grand plan here, no surpassing visions – no Nazism, no American Exceptionalism. Just a simple exhortation to deal as simply, as plainly, and as truthfully as possible with the basic joy of life. It's not a lot to go by, and yet people cross seas in flimsy boats for it. In its pursuit we rally for equal marriage rights. We tear down statues. We rage against insults. We build theatre companies. We take kids to parks. We visit art galleries on rainy days. We argue with our parents. We leave home. We love. Most of life unfolds from this pretty simple understanding of our situation: just to be alive is good. So in spite of the murk and fog of this play, it has a strikingly beautiful idea as its heart. Just to live. It sounds so simple...

***

A word about the adaptation. On the one hand Ibsen is a supremely logical writer. The verbal surface of the play is precise and interlocking, almost unfeeling. On the other hand he is a murky and difficult writer who becomes lost inside his characters' contradictions. The precise surface of the play masks a heaving underworld of uncertainty and double-vision. It makes him a treacherous writer to adapt. Even a single misplaced word can send the action of the scene spinning off in the wrong direction. We're in our third week of rehearsals now and we still pour over our literal translation. Every day, still, we make tiny changes to a dozen or so lines. Today, for example, we wondered if "never" in Norwegian has a different weight and rhythm to the word in English, in which case although Ibsen has Oswald say it twice – "Never, never" – would we be better off saying it only once? (We settled on once.) If the word for "blame" can also mean "judgement" should we use "blame"

or “judgement”? (We settled for blame.) These little problems can create big difficulties, in the same way as a slight error in setting the course of a plane can end up sending the thing into a mountain rather than onto a tarmac. (We hope for the tarmac.)

I’ve added lines here or there, mostly to open up ideas which were current in Ibsen’s time that aren’t current now. The word “ideals”, for example, meant something slightly different then, so I’ve added a few lines to tune us in to the “ideals” of the time. Sometimes I’ve cut lines. Ibsen’s characters can say too much, which was really his way of helping 19th century actors act the right things so that 19th century audiences got the unspeakable subtext of what was, then, a scandalous play. Our approach to acting is different now – we know how to say less, and things that were scandalous to audiences then are like running water to us. So there have been little cuts.

The play was contemporary when it was written. Now it’s a historical play. I’ve tried to find ways for the play to feel like the past while still talking directly to us. On the whole this adaptation is an attempt to come up with a fairly direct rendering of Ibsen’s play into a language that makes sense to us but still retains the feeling of the past – which still pulls us into the murky otherworld of Ibsen’s 1881. The gap between then and now is interesting. Much has changed. But our anxieties about love, marriage, sexual violence, disease, death – these things remain very much alive.

***

The published script is now several weeks old. We continue to make many changes in rehearsals. So much of the finesse we’ve found has come from the actors. I owe them a huge debt of thanks. Since I first wrote this note, the “never” has come back and gone away again. Our work is never finished! Our work is never finished...

Eamon Flack

ABOUT THE WRITER

Henrik Ibsen, born 1828 in Norway, is regarded as the father of modern drama and is also often referred to as the father of Realism. After Shakespeare, he is the second most performed playwright in the world and is considered to be one of the most influential and insightful dramatists of the 19th Century. Ibsen wrote over 25 plays and his most notable works include: *A Doll's House*, *Peer Gynt*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Hedda Gabler* and *The Master Builder*. Many of Ibsen's plays were considered controversial as he attacked society's entrenched beliefs and consciously tackled contentious contemporary issues and taboo topics.

Ghosts is one of Ibsen's most controversial works. In a letter to his publisher, Ibsen himself anticipated that the play would be met with resistance: "It is reasonable to suppose that *Ghosts* will cause alarm in some circles; but so it must be. If it did not do so, it would not have been necessary to write it." When the play was first published in 1881, it only sold a few copies with most copies being returned to the publisher. Several countries even banned the play. In England, *Ghosts* was banned from performance because "it failed to show due respect for the institution of marriage and it dealt with the taboo topic of venereal disease." The Examiner of Plays in England refused to license the play calling it "blasphemous" and "revoltingly suggestive." *Ghosts* premiered in Chicago in 1882. Critics were outraged at the inclusion of taboo topics such as venereal disease, infidelity, incest and euthanasia. Ibsen's perceived attacks on religion and the institution of marriage were also controversial. Public outcry against the play was so strong that it was not performed widely until two years later. In 1898, the King of Sweden informed Ibsen that *Ghosts* was not a good play and that he should not have written it. Ibsen remained steadfast replying, "Your majesty, I had to write *Ghosts*."

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Robert Menzies, Tom Conroy & Pamela Rabe

CHARACTERS & SETTING

CHARACTERS

MRS HELENE ALVING, Captain Alving's widow
OSVALD ALVING, her son, a painter
PASTOR MANDERS
ENGSTRAND, a carpenter
REGINE ENGSTRAND, in Mrs. Alving's service

SETTING

Mrs. Alving's country estate by a large fjord in western Norway.

At the play's opening Helene Alving is preparing to host the grand opening of a new orphanage she has had built in memory of her late husband, Captain Alving. The Captain was a widely respected member of the community. Mrs Alving has always concealed the truth about her unhappy marriage and her late husband's true nature. To protect her son from his father's influence, Mrs Alving sent her son Osvald abroad at a young age. Osvald, now in his mid-twenties, has returned home after living as an artist in France.

> "But I almost believe we're all ghosts. Every one of us. Everything we do has already happened, everything that has already happened is in us. It all returns. Not just what we inherit from our parents. Everything. Dead ideas. Dead beliefs. Dead customs. Lodged in us. And we cannot be free of them. You read the news every day and there they are, underneath it all, the ghosts. As many ghosts as grains of sand. And we think we know who we are. We have no idea." *(Mrs Alving, Act 2).*

Pamela Rabe & Robert Menzies in rehearsal

REHEARSING GHOSTS

Pamela Rabe & Taylor Ferguson

Describe what you see in the picture above.
What do you think the relationship between these two characters might be?
Who has the higher status in this moment? Why?

Robert Menzies & Taylor Ferguson

Describe what you see in the picture above.
Where do you think this scene might be taking place? Why?
What do you think is happening in this moment?

Pamela Rabe & Robert Menzies

Describe what you see in the picture above.
What do you think the relationship between these two characters might be?
What do you think is happening in this moment?

Tom Conroy & Pamela Rabe

Describe what you see in the picture above.
What do you think the relationship between these two characters might be?
How do the actors' body language and facial expressions convey this relationship?

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

The elements of production are the technical and visual elements used to manipulate the elements of drama in order to effectively tell a play's story.

In these notes we are going to look at *Ghosts*

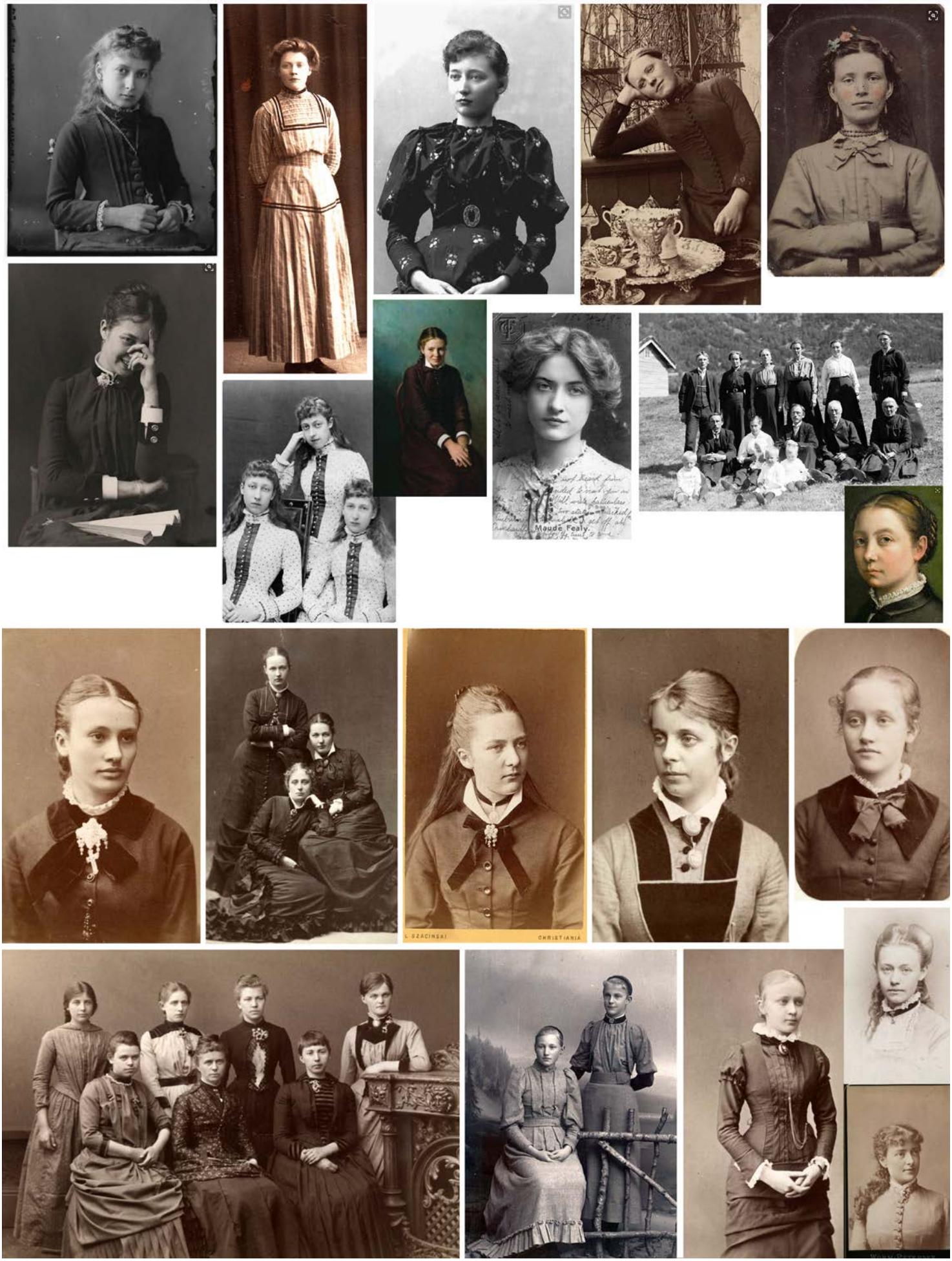
Costume Design: References & Renderings
Set Model Box
The Rain Effect

COSTUME DESIGN: REFERENCES & RENDERINGS

Character: REGINE ENGSTRAND

Costume references by Julie Lynch (2017)

Character: REGINE ENGSTRAND



Costume references by Julie Lynch (2017)

Character: REGINE ENGSTRAND

Costume rendering by Julie Lynch (2017)

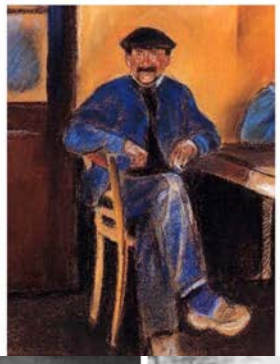
Taylor Ferguson as Regine Engstrand

Character: JACOB ENGSTRAND

















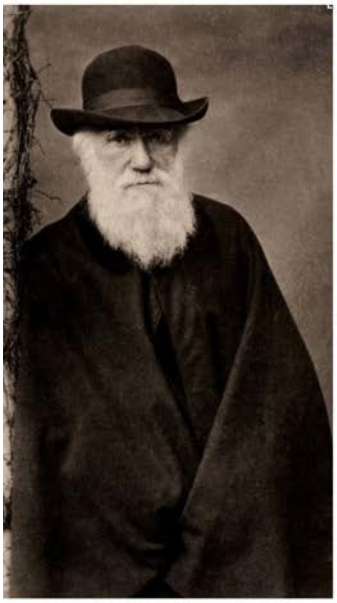

Costume references by Julie Lynch (2017)

Character: JACOB ENGSTRAND

Costume renderings by Julie Lynch (2017)

Colin Moody as Jakob Engstrand

Character: PASTOR MANDERS



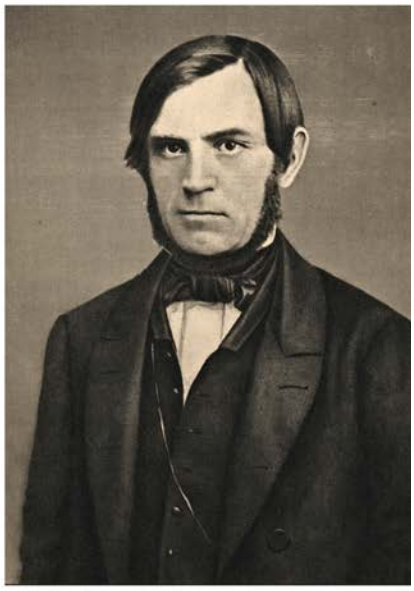













Costume references by Julie Lynch (2017)

Character: PASTOR MANDERS

Costume renderings by Julie Lynch (2017)

Robert Menzies as Pastor Manders

Character: HELENE ALVING

Costume references by Julie Lynch (2017)

Character: HELENE ALVING

Costume references by Julie Lynch (2017)

Character: HELENE ALVING

Costume rendering by Julie Lynch (2017)

Pamela Rabe as Mrs Helene Alving

Character: OSVALD ALVING

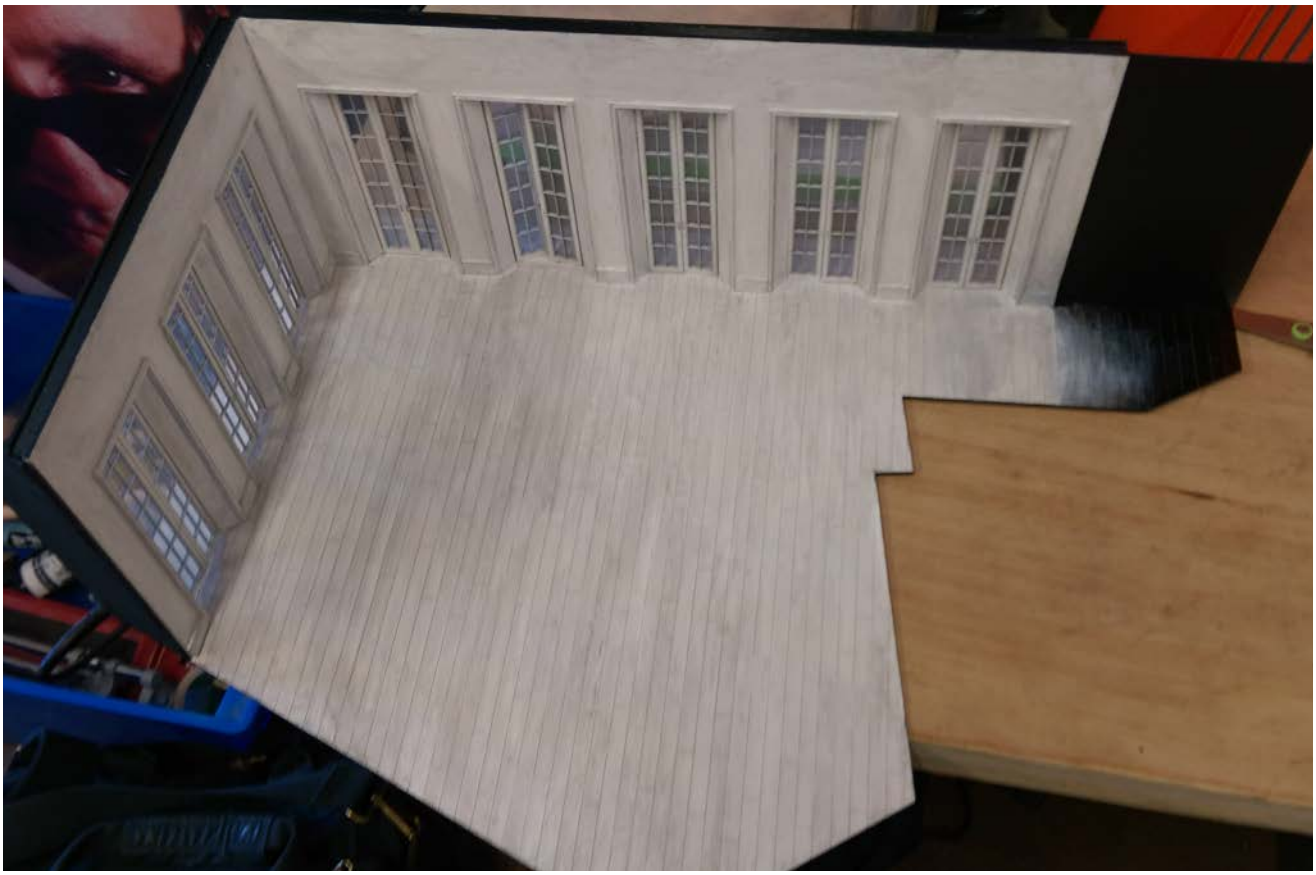
Costume references by Julie Lynch (2017)

Character: OSVALD ALVING

Costume rendering by Julie Lynch (2017)

Tom Conroy as Osvald Alving

SET DESIGN



Set Model Box by Michael Hankin (2017)

Set Model Box by Michael Hankin (2017)

Set Model Box by Michael Hankin (2017)

Questions to consider after seeing this production

1. What are the key differences between the early model box design pictured above & the final set design you saw during the show?

2. Why might these changes have taken place?

3. How many entrance/exit points were used on the set in the production?

4. What was the effect of the light white wash across the set?

THE RAIN EFFECT

This production of *Ghosts* features a rain effect which was designed, created and installed by Belvoir's production team.

During the production it rains against five French doors of the set for approximately fifty minutes of the performance.

The initial brief was to create two types of rain – heavy and mist. During the tech week this evolved to be a constant, misty rain.

The rain effect uses between 1000 and 1500 litres of recycled water per performance. After each performance the water is pumped back into a rain irrigation tank temporarily located at the side of the theatre and used again for the following performance. The rain irrigation tank has the capacity to hold 3000 litres, allowing for the days on which there are two performances. Water is pumped from the tank via a hose which enters the theatre through a backstage window and travels upstairs to the back of the set PS (prompt side). The water is then dispersed via three valves (see Figure 1) to ten nozzles located at the top of the five French doors.

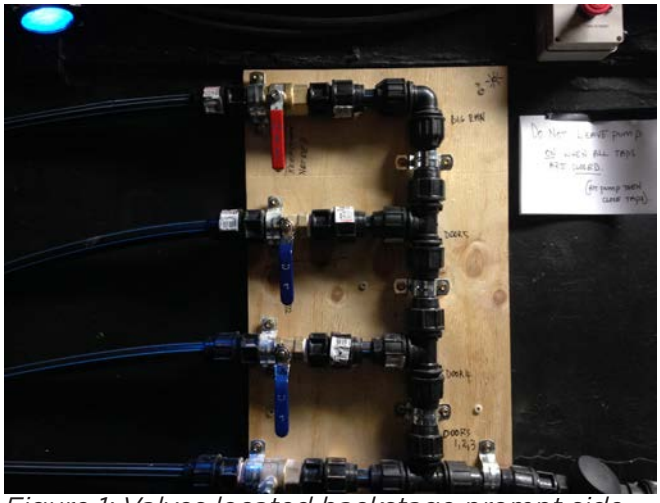


Figure 1: Valves located backstage prompt side

In order to control the water flow Belvoir's Production Manager elected to use nozzles which distribute the water in what is called a flat fan formation (see Figure 2), unlike lawn sprinklers, for example, which distribute their water in a full circle.

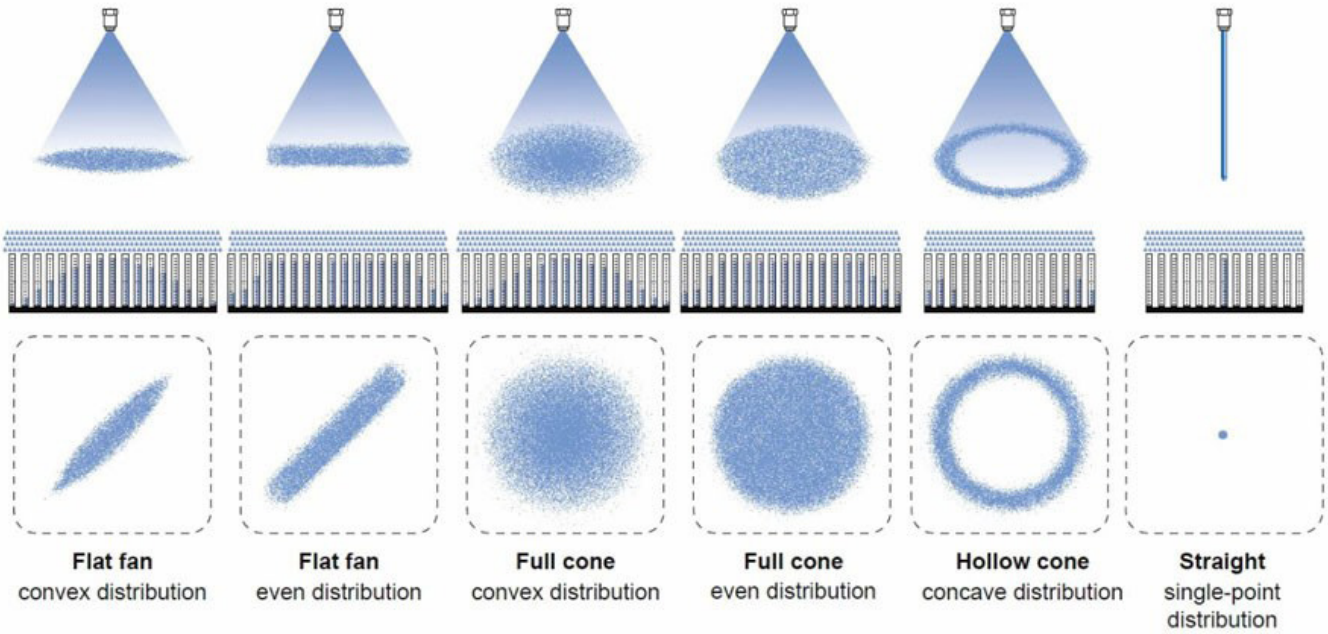


Figure 2

Each nozzle is tilted towards its corresponding French door resulting in the water hitting the Perspex at precisely the right angle to make it look like it is raining. This is called focusing the rain. When the actors open the 'hero' door to enter the stage it looks as though they are walking through a lot of rain, but in reality they only get wet for a fraction of a second. What the audience sees is an illusion created by theatrical smoke, a floor which is painted to look much wetter than it is, and an actor who has stood backstage and sprayed themselves with water to make it look as though they have been standing in the rain.

To create the mist effect, a theatrical smoke machine is connected to a very long PVC pipe which is installed underneath the floor of the corridor behind the French doors. This pipe carries the smoke from its origin, which is a smoke machine that sits on the Juliet balcony on PS (underneath the water valves) and disperses smoke throughout the corridor. Behind the French doors, and unseen by the audience, tiny holes are drilled through the set floor. Thanks to these tiny little holes and some domestic straws (see Figure 3), theatrical smoke rises up from the tube and enters the corridor behind the French doors. When this smoke interacts with the cool air created by the rain system it approximates the visual effect of a very cold, rainy day in Norway.

Figure 3: Straws disperse smoke

The stage floor behind the French doors is built to be lower US (upstage) than it is DS (downstage). When the rain hits the floor of the corridor behind the French doors, it runs into a grate on the US side of the floor. Areas of the stage floor behind the French doors (out of sight of the audience) are covered with a type of maritime carpet used on yachts. This is so that the actors' shoes do not make a noise as they travel along the corridor. This particular maritime carpet is designed not to attract mould, algae or, in Sydney in spring – mosquitoes!

Figure 4: Trough under stage floor

The water falls through this grate into a trough (see Figure 4) which is positioned at an angle under the stage. The trough is higher on the OP (opposite prompt) side than it is on PS which encourages the water to travel towards the PS of the stage. At the PS of the trough there is a catchment for the water connected to an electric pump which pumps the water travel back down into the outside irrigation tank.

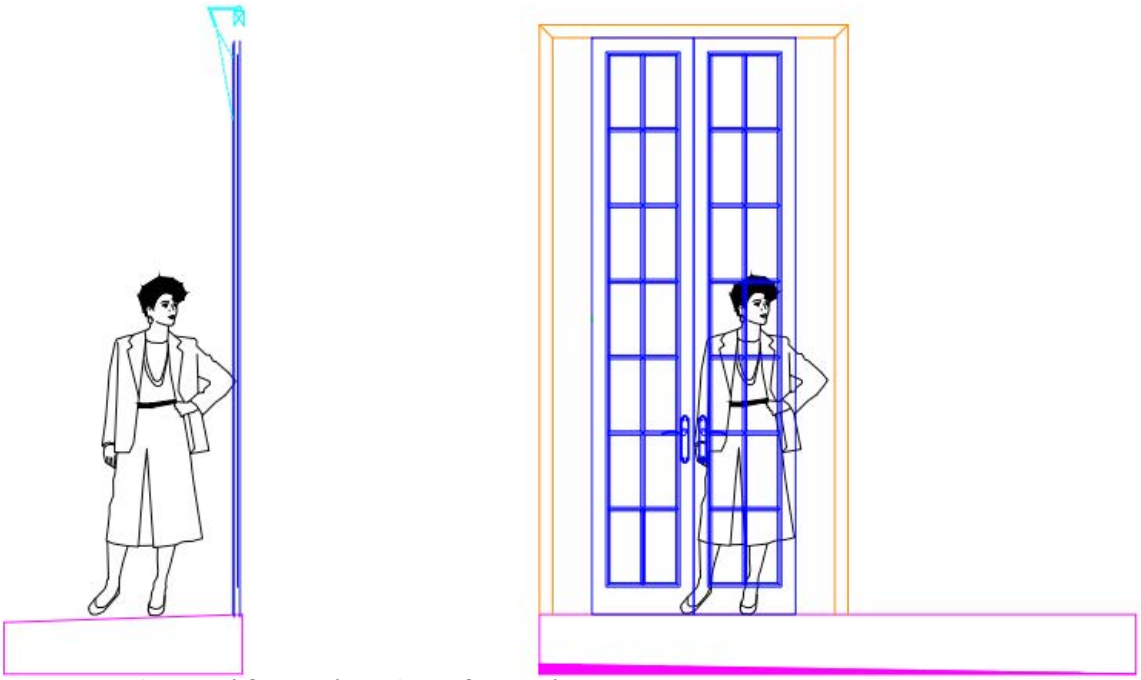


Figure 5: Section and front elevation of trough

A significant consideration in having this amount of water in the theatre is how to prevent it from coming in contact with the theatrical lighting above the stage.

Figure 6: Corridor behind French doors

Water and electricity are never a good combination. In order to avoid contact between the two elements, all the theatrical lights must be hung above the water system so that they do not get wet (see Figure 6). The lights are then focused to ensure the beam of light reaches the desired spot on stage without being impeded by the nozzles.

If the light beam travels through the space where the water nozzles are positioned then the nozzles will cause a shadow in the light beam. To prevent unattractive and unwanted shadows falling on the stage we have designed a system where the lights and the rain nozzles can be focused independently.

Below is a diagram created by our Production Manager Sally Withnell.

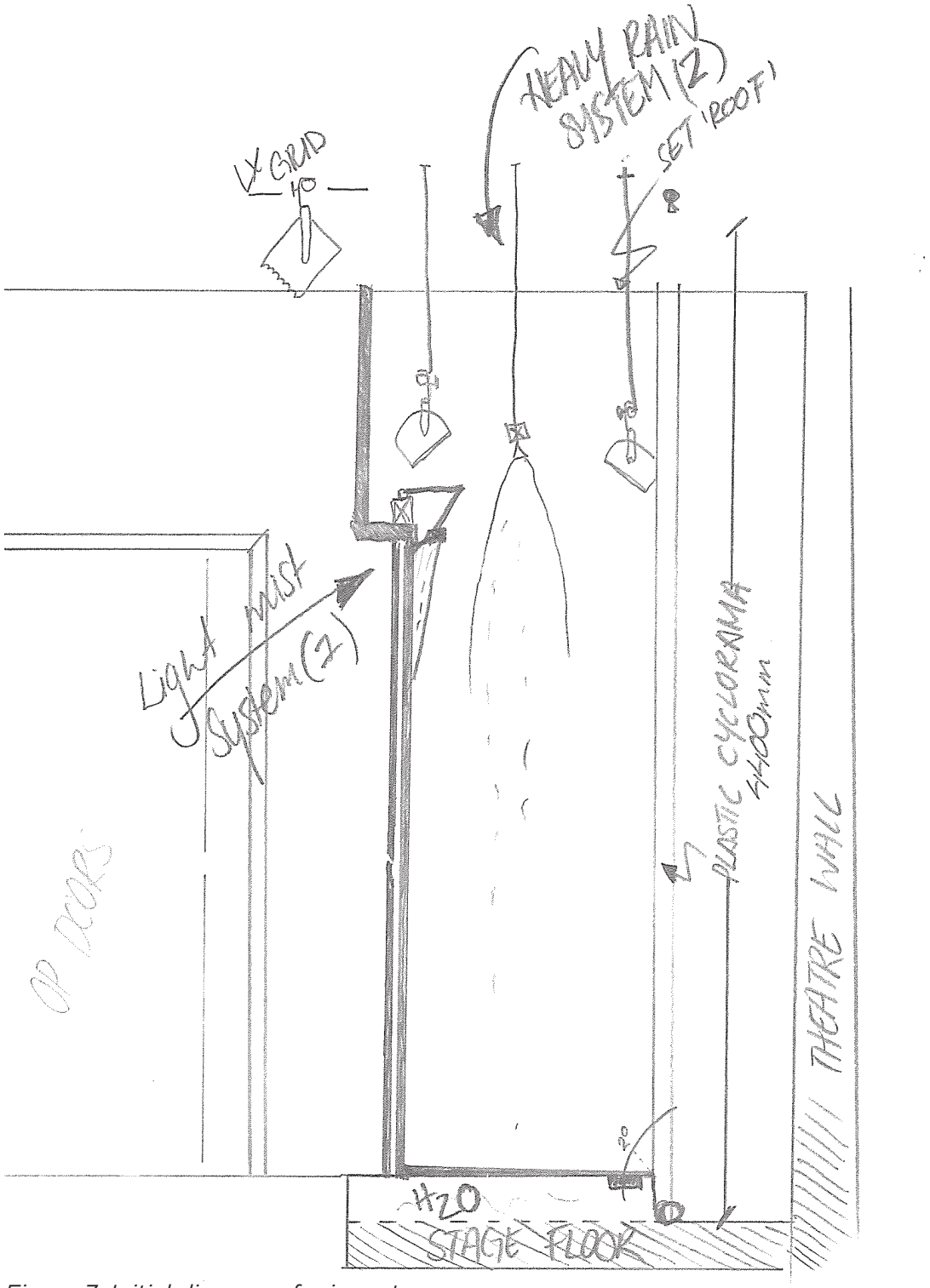


Figure 7: Initial diagram of rain system

POST SHOW DISCUSSION

The original title of the play was *Gengangere*. This is a Danish word which translates as 'the revenants', 'the again-walkers' or 'the ones who come back'. As there is no direct English equivalent for 'Gengangere', the title was translated to *Ghosts* for its premiere in Chicago. Ibsen did not like this translation. Do you think that *Ghosts* is a fitting title for this play? Why/why not?

Taylor Ferguson & Colin Moody

When *Ghosts* premiered in 1882 it was extremely controversial and was even banned in many theatres. What themes/issues do you think would have been confronting for audiences of the time? Are these themes still shocking to a contemporary audience. Why/Why not?

Taylor Ferguson, Tom Conroy & Pamela Rabe

Describe the use of lighting in the production. How did the lighting states and changes enhance the dramatic action, mood and style?

Robert Menzies & Pamela Rabe

What was the dramatic impact of the final scene? How did you feel at the end?

Pamela Rabe & Tom Conroy

PODCAST

Step behind the scenes with director Eamon Flack, lighting designer Nick Schlieper, and actors Pamela Rabe and Tom Conroy as they discuss Ibsen's 19th century masterpiece and what it holds for a modern audience.

Produced by Zoe Ferguson for Belvoir

Listen to the *Ghosts* podcast online here:

https://omny.fm/shows/belvoir/ghosts-backstage

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Belvoir Education would like to thank Georgia Goode, Amy Goodhew, Chloe Greaves, Michael Hankin, Julie Lynch, Cara Nash & Sally Withnell for their support creating these notes.