

THE Classic Theatre

SAN ANTONIO

presents



***Ghosts* by Henrik Ibsen**

Translated by Christopher Hampton

Ghosts is produced by special arrangement with Samuel French, Inc.

Our student performances are made possible by a generous grant from



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE(S)	
3	SYNOPSIS
4	ABOUT THE TITLE
5 & 6	ABOUT THE PLAYWRIGHT(s)
7	PRODUCTION TEAM
8 & 9	THEMES of <i>Ghosts</i>
10	VOCABULARY/STYLE
11	DELVING DEEPER/ACTIVITIES

The Classic Theatre's vision is to build a professional theatre that inspires passionate involvement in a shared theatrical experience and to create a source of pride for our community.

JUST FOR STUDENTS: Join our AIM High Internship Program!

AIM High offers total immersion in design, technical production and acting through hands-on experience working with professional theatre artists and technicians on our productions during the 2014-2015 Season.

Email Director of Education Christie Beckham for more information:

Christie@classictheatre.org



AIM High intern Renelle Wilson (far right) onstage with the cast of Classic Theatre of San Antonio's award-winning production of *Scapin* by Molière, 2013.

SYNOPSIS

For the characters in *Ghosts*, tomorrow is a big day. They are all convening on Rosenvold, the Alving estate, to dedicate the Captain Alving Memorial Orphanage. Mrs. Alving is the widow of Captain Alving (also called Chamberlain Alving), a gentleman widely respected in his community. Mrs. Alving has kept his true behavior – alcoholism, womanizing, and illness – secret for twenty years. She sent her son, Oswald, away at age seven to protect him from the polluting influence of his father, who also had an illegitimate daughter by a servant. This daughter, Regine, was brought up by the carpenter Engstrand and now works in Mrs. Alving's house.

Pastor Manders is a minister in town and the executor of the Alving Estate. He's an old friend of the family. In fact, Mrs. Alving was in love with him and once fled to him from her husband. Pastor Manders had sent her home, citing her duty as a wife and his need to protect his reputation. Now he has more reason to scold his old flame, as Mrs. Alving has been reading radical books and openly agrees with her son's liberal ideas about sex. She tells Pastor Manders the truth about her husband but still wants to keep it hidden from Oswald.

Oswald has secrets of his own. He's terminally ill with the same illness his father had and, knowing he will at some point become totally incapacitated, has come home to die, hopefully with the help of Regine, whom he intends to marry. Just as Mrs. Alving is about to let them know this can't happen – Oswald and Regine don't know they're brother and sister – a fire burns down the orphanage. This is doubly problematic because Pastor Manders has insisted, and Mrs. Alving has agreed, on going without insurance. Pastor Manders is terrified of the scandal but finds an out in Engstrand, who promises to take the blame for the fire if Manders supports his proposed Sailor's Home (actually a brothel).

Finally, Mrs. Alving tells Oswald the truth about her husband: He had been miserably unhappy, had sought pleasures of the flesh, and one of the “consequences” was Regine. While Regine has been pursuing Oswald as a meal ticket, once she finds out he's ill and is also her half-brother, she gives up. Oswald and Mrs. Alving are left alone, and Oswald makes his mother promise to euthanize him when the time comes. She agrees, not realizing the time will come so soon. As the play ends, the sun is rising, Oswald is slumped in a vegetative state, and Mrs. Alving stands with the morphine, trying to decide what to do.

Andrew Thornton (Pastor Manders) and Sam Gilliam (Mrs. Alving) rehearse a scene from Classic Theatre's production of *Ghosts*.



What's Up with the Title?

Ibsen doesn't leave us guessing about what the title *Ghosts* means. There are four important moments in the play when ghosts are mentioned: when Regine and Oswald are overheard making out; in Mrs. Alving's long speech to Manders about ghosts as dead ideas; when Mrs. Alving effectively ends her communication with Pastor Manders; and when Oswald tells his mother to give up the idea of mother-child affection. As the haunted, troubled protagonist, Mrs. Alving is always the first to utter the word *ghosts*. These references help show us how her thinking about the past changes throughout the play.

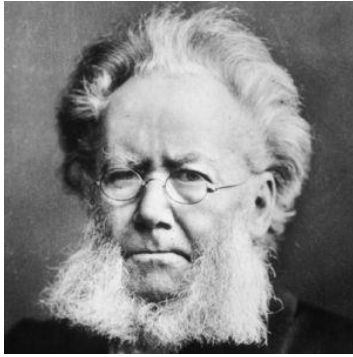
Mrs. Alving's long speech on ghosts says the most about what Ibsen means. Mrs. Alving muses,

I sometimes think we're all ghosts, Pastor Manders. It's not only what we've inherited from our parents that haunts us. It's all the old obsolete ideas, all kinds of old obsolete beliefs. They're not alive in us: but even so, we can't shake free of them.

While Mrs. Alving first considers Captain Alving the ghostly burden she wants to get rid of, she begins to see that her own social restraints and obligations are haunting her too. Shedding them becomes her action in the play.



Iain Glen (of *Game of Thrones* fame) as Pastor Manders and Lesley Sharp as Mrs. Alving in a 2010 production of *Ghosts* at London's Duchess Theatre.



HENRIK IBSEN (1828-1906)

Henrik Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, in Skien, Norway. He grew up in the small Norwegian coastal town as the oldest of five children born to Knud and Marichen Ibsen. His father was a successful merchant, and his mother painted, played the piano and loved to go to the theater. Ibsen himself expressed an interest in becoming an artist as well.

The family was thrown into poverty when Ibsen was 8 because of problems with his father's business. Nearly all traces of their previous affluence had to be sold off to cover debts, and the family moved to a rundown farm near town. There Ibsen spent much of his time reading, painting and performing magic tricks. At 15, Ibsen stopped school and went to work, landing a position as an apprentice in a pharmacy in Grimstad. He worked there for six years, using his limited free time to write poetry and paint. While there, he fathered a son with a maid. Though he provided the boy with some financial support, Ibsen never met him. In 1849, he wrote his first play, *Catilina*, a drama written in verse modeled after one of his great influences, William Shakespeare.

The following year Ibsen had a fateful encounter with violinist and theater manager, Ole Bull. Bull liked Ibsen and offered him a job as a writer and manager for the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen. Unlike many other writers and poets, Ibsen had a long and seemingly happy marriage to Suzannah Daae Thoresen. The couple wed in 1858 and welcomed their only child, son Sigurd, the following year. Ibsen left Norway in 1862, eventually settling in Italy for a time. There, in 1865, he wrote *Brand*, a five-act tragedy about a clergyman whose feverish devotion to his faith costs him his family and ultimately his life. The play made him famous in Scandinavia. He then wrote his most famous work, *A Doll's House*. This 1879 play set tongues a-wagging throughout Europe for its exploration of the lead character's struggle with the traditional roles of wife and mother and her own need for self-determination. 1881's *Ghosts* stirred up even more controversy by tackling such topics as incest and venereal disease. The outcry was so strong that the play wasn't performed widely until two years later. Ibsen's next work, *An Enemy of the People*, showed one man in conflict with his community. Some critics say it was Ibsen's response to the backlash he received for *Ghosts*.

In 1891, Ibsen returned to Norway as a literary hero. He may have left as a frustrated artist, but he came back as an internationally known playwright. For much of his life, Ibsen had lived an

HENRIK IBSEN BIOGRAPHY continued

almost reclusive existence, but he seemed to thrive in the spotlight in his later years, becoming a tourist attraction of sorts in Christiania. He also enjoyed the events held in his honor in 1898 to mark his seventieth birthday. He continued to write plays with a more self-reflective quality, including *The Master Builder* and *When We Dead Awaken*, his final play.

In 1900, Ibsen had a series of strokes that left him unable to write. He managed to live for several more years, but he was not fully present during much of this time. Ibsen died on May 23, 1906. His last words were "To the contrary!" in Norwegian. Considered a literary titan at the time of his passing, he received a state funeral from the Norwegian government.

While Ibsen may be gone, his work continues to be performed around the world. *Peer Gynt*, *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* are his most widely produced plays today. Actresses such as Gillian Anderson and Cate Blanchett have taken on Ibsen's Nora and Hedda Gabler characters, which are considered to be two of the most demanding theatrical roles ever. In addition to his plays, Ibsen also wrote around 300 poems. Today, Ibsen is the world's most produced playwright excepting only his idol, William Shakespeare.



Christopher Hampton, translator (1946-present)

Christopher Hampton was born on January 26, 1946, in Faial, Azores, Portugal. He graduated from Oxford in 1968 and worked in London at the Royal Court Theatre alongside fellow playwright David Hare. Hampton is best known for his films *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988) and *Atonement* (2007). His plays include *Savages* and recent translations of Yasmina Reza's *Art* and *God of Carnage*. He has been married to Laura de Holesch since 1971. They have two children.

PRODUCTION TEAM
Classic Theatre of San Antonio

CAST OF CHARACTERS

<i>Mrs. Helene Alving (widow of Captain Alving)</i>	<i>Sam Gilliam*</i>
<i>Osvald Alving (her son, a painter)</i>	<i>Trevor Chauvin</i>
<i>Pastor Manders</i>	<i>Andrew Thornton</i>
<i>Jakob Engstrand (a carpenter)</i>	<i>George Burnett</i>
<i>Regine Engstrand (Mrs. Alving's Maid)</i>	<i>Julya Jara</i>

**Member, Actors Equity Association*

<i>Director</i>	<i>Omar Leos</i>
<i>Stage Manager</i>	<i>Alexandria Sepulveda</i>
<i>Tech Director</i>	<i>Rick Clyde</i>
<i>Set Design</i>	<i>Ric Slocum</i>
<i>Costume Design</i>	<i>Diane Malone</i>
<i>Light Designer</i>	<i>Felice A. Garcia</i>
<i>Sound Designer</i>	<i>Rick Malone</i>
<i>Prop Master</i>	<i>Terri Peña Ross</i>
<i>Composer</i>	<i>Darrin Newhardt</i>
<i>Production Manager</i>	<i>Linda Ford</i>
<i>Photographer</i>	<i>Bw photostreet/sRagnaR fotografi</i>

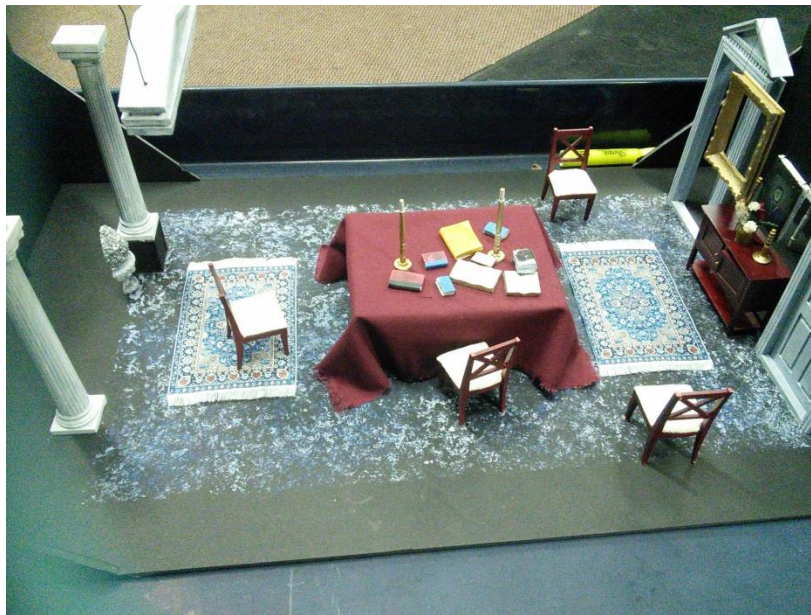
STAFF- The Classic Theatre of San Antonio

Rick Malone, Executive Director, Founding Member
Diane Malone, Co-Artistic Director, Founding Member
Allan Ross, Co-Artistic Director, Founding Member
Christie Beckham, Director of Education
Joseph Urick, Graphics and Public Relations
Linda Ford, House Manager/Bookkeeper
Florence Buntin, Box Office Manager

THEMES of *Ghosts*

FREEDOM AND CONFINEMENT

The characters in *Ghosts* are trapped. Social obligations, class restrictions, religion, and family have them all in a vice grip. The main character, Mrs. Alving, is trapped by her own hang-ups. Like a good Victorian housewife, she believes she should keep quiet about her unconventional ideas, protect her bad husband's good reputation, and above all be a good mother. Mrs. Alving's ailing son wipes out these "shoulds" with his belief in the idea of *livsglede*, choosing your own personal path to joy. Don't worry about being a good mom, he says. In fact, stop being a mom entirely. In the end, he asks her to put him out of his misery.



Model of the *Ghosts* set design for
Classic Theatre by Ric Slocum.

DUTY

Duty is a word repeated over and over in *Ghosts*. Everyone has duties related to the role they play in the society. The wife/mother is duty-bound to protect her husband's reputation (no matter how unsavory he is) and to sacrifice everything for her son. In return the son must love his mother. The maid is duty-bound to clean up everyone's mess – no matter how colossal it is. The Pastor is duty-bound to regulate everyone else's fulfillment of their duty. No wonder these people seem so dour. All this responsibility is exhausting and keeps them from being themselves.

MEMORY AND THE PAST

We can tell from the title of *Ghosts* that the past plays a role here. The spooky, creaky Alving house is collapsing under the weight of the past. There's a memory of a misbehaving father, compounded by Mrs. Alving's memory of every lie she had to tell to keep his real life a secret. Mrs. Alving wants to bury the past, but when her son returns with the past afflicting his body, her mission changes. Instead of a final burial of her husband, Mrs. Alving facilitates an enormous recovery of the memory of his life. Her new understanding of her husband's life-loving nature – and her role in having repressed it – transforms her understanding of herself.



A scene from the original European production of *Ghosts* in 1885.

GUILT AND BLAME

Ibsen saw guilt and shame as Protestant control mechanisms and spent much of his life criticizing them. He examined these two emotions almost obsessively in his literary work, and wasn't a fan of these two carriers of unhappiness. In *Ghosts*, guilt and shame are nasty byproducts of a world governed by *shoulds*. You should stick with your husband, you should love your mother, and so forth. Get rid of this garbage, says Ibsen. He's advocating an authentic response to the world, one motivated by the heart, not by feelings of guilt.

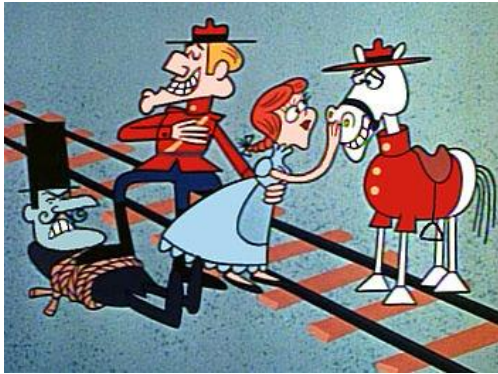
VOCABULARY

Fjord- a long, narrow inlet with steep sides or cliffs, created by glacial erosion.

Obsolete- no longer in general use; fallen into disuse; old-fashioned.

STYLE/GENRE

Melodrama is the theatrical form Ibsen used to express his ideas. Melodramas became very popular in Europe during the 19th century. The Victorian stage melodrama featured six stock characters: the hero, the villain, the heroine, an aged parent, a sidekick and a servant of the aged parent engaged in a sensational plot featuring themes of love and murder. Often the good but not very clever hero is duped by a scheming villain, who has eyes on the damsel in distress until fate intervenes at the end to ensure the triumph of good over evil. Ibsen goes far beyond the traditional signposts of melodrama – think stock characters, contrived plots, and suspense. In fact, he is indebted to the form for much of the way he uses language.



Traces of the melodrama genre are still seen in modern dramatic works. Which characters represent the stock characters in *Ghosts*? The villain? The hero? The damsel in distress? What other shows can you think of that are melodramatic?

DELVING DEEPER

(to be answered in class or used as writing prompts...)

Which character is most free in *Ghosts*? Which is the most trapped?

Do you believe Mrs. Alving was right to keep her husband's true nature from her son? Ibsen seems to have an opinion, but what do you think?

In this play, do the lower-class characters have a different concept of duty than the upper-class characters? How so?

Does Engstrand fear any incriminating ghosts from the past? Did he set the fire on purpose?

How does Regine take the revelation about her mother? Does she feel shame? Does it motivate her actions at all?

DEBATE TOPIC:

Pastor Manders' decades-old guilt about his attraction to Mrs. Alving fuels his ferocious protection of his reputation: True or false?

PERFORMANCE:

Improvise or write and perform an alternate ending or a sequel to *Ghosts*. What does Mrs. Alving do next? What becomes of Regine? Pastor Manders?

Improvise or write and perform a prequel to *Ghosts*. Perhaps include a scene between Captain Alving and Regine's mother or between Regine's mother and Engstrand. How were arrangements made for the child Regine?



Sam Gilliam (Mrs. Alving) and Andrew Thornton (Pastor Manders) in Classic Theatre's *Ghosts*.