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Redecorating *A Doll's House* in Contemporary German Theater—Multiple Authorship in Ibsen's *Nora*

Clemens Räthel

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REDECORATING A DOLL'S HOUSE IN
CONTEMPORARY GERMAN
THEATER—MULTIPLE AUTHORSHIP IN
IBSEN'S NORA*

CLEMENS RÄTHEL

INTRODUCTION OR: HOW TO END THE PLAY?

The last time I went to see Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) staged in Berlin, I was taken by surprise that, afterwards, a colleague did not ask me how much, or even if, I liked the production or the cast. Instead, she looked at me very excitedly and wondered: how did they end the play? I found that reaction quite telling: *A Doll's House* counts amongst the most famous, most performed and most widely traveled pieces in the world. As Martin Puchner argues, Ibsen's oeuvre, and in particular *A Doll's House*, must be regarded as world literature (Puchner 2013, 31). Ever since its premiere, Nora's struggles have been performed, read, discussed and analyzed worldwide (Fischer-Lichte 2011, 1–5). Still, the question of how to end this famous play seems to be of great importance. Even more: the fact it seems to be a question at all is highly revealing. As a theater scholar, no one has ever asked me how a theater ended *Hamlet* (of course, with a dead Danish prince), *Jeppe on the Hill* (with a drunken peasant) or *Faust* (in hell, obviously). But when it comes to *A Doll's House*, the ending seems to be the key topic.

It is from here that I wish to take my point of departure. My question is how Ibsen's *A Doll's House* has been changed, transformed—or, as I choose to put it, redecorated on the German theater stage.

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Obviously, I cannot nor do I wish to give an overview of almost 140 years of Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in Germany, and this has partly been done already (Gran 1928, 214–249; Giesing 1984, 11–45; Janss 2017). Rather, I will focus on two more recent productions in Berlin by asking how they approach the play, and which interpretations and readings of the drama they deliver: Thomas Ostermeier's now famous *Nora* (Schaubühne) and the production by the same title at Deutsches Theater Berlin, directed by Stefan Pucher. The aim of the close work of studying these two productions is not to highlight them as the ultimate way of doing Ibsen justice, nor do I want to celebrate German-speaking theater as the beacon of contemporary Ibsen interpretation. However, Ostermeier's take on *A Doll's House* has changed the way Ibsen is staged in Germany profoundly, setting new standards (Schaper 2015). Pucher's *mise-en-scène* has not had a similar effect by any means; it shows to a greater degree the impact of Ostermeier's work on others and allows us to follow multiple entanglements of theater performances. As prototypes of the so-called German *Regietheater* (director's theater), both productions work with a similar esthetic frame and are produced in the same city, even though they did not run simultaneously. Thus, this article is also an attempt to set these productions into dialog with one another.

In what follows I will present the two productions and their specific takes on Ibsen, especially regarding the ending; I will then touch on the issue of reception before, finally, asking which effects the processes of redecoration have and what they can tell us about the way we relate to and perceive theater. I will scrutinize how, on the one hand, Ibsen's text and, on the other, the theatrical event, with all its agents and actors, interact, and what these interactions can tell us about both text and theater.

I am using the term redecoration in order to highlight both the simultaneity of different settings, but also the spatial and temporal overlaps. I herein refer to Hanne Jansen's and Anna Wegener's concept of translation as a multi-layered process. Their approach draws attention to the "chain of successive

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

events through which a translation comes into being” rather than solely focusing on the final product of the process (Jansen and Wegener 2013, 6). To carry this idea forward and, additionally, highlight the spatial aspect, I have opted to refer to these processes as matters of redecoration. A redecorated room always bears traces from different times, different usages of the room and, at the same time, makes it possible to trace the multitude of (re-)decorators as part of the processes. Applied to the theater performances I am analyzing, this concept can help us better understand the multiple authors involved in creating such artistic undertakings.

SHORT HISTORY OF (GERMAN) ENDINGS

The question of how to end the play already arose shortly after its premiere in 1879 in Copenhagen, and became even more apparent when Ibsen himself—more or less under constraint—offered an alternative to the famous slamming of the door that onomatopoetically underlined Nora’s grand exit. Especially in Germany, the ending was discussed extensively and underwent a number of alterations, and the urge to invent new endings is still very much alive in the German-speaking theater. This current theatrical approach has a long history which is, at least in a rough overview, worth noting.

A Doll's House became a theater scandal that would eventually have an impact on discourses beyond the walls of the theater buildings in which it was housed. Moral and legal evaluations of the plot were also vividly discussed in the press, furthering reflections about whether it would be right to sue Nora because of forgery, whether it was psychologically reasonable that the light-hearted Nora would break with her life in such an existential way and, most of all, whether it was morally correct to leave her husband and children (Kühne 2004, 59–60).

Newspapers, for example *Faedrelandet* in Denmark or the German magazine *Die Gegenwart*, put Nora on trial with different outcomes: in Denmark she was found not guilty (but had to pay

the legal costs); in Germany, however, Nora was judged guilty of forgery. As her delinquency was not aimed at personal enrichment, she was sentenced to only one day in prison. The legal arguments offered in these two examples construe Nora as a real person and *A Doll's House* as a transcript of an interrogation rather than a play. Furthermore, the "literary world" felt the need to intervene as well: authors such as Amalie Skram, Frederik Petersen, and Elfride Fibiger took up the task of either supporting Ibsen and Nora or condemning their irresponsible behavior (Gran 1928, 249–250). All these discussions paved the way for theatrical interventions and both theaters and newspapers across Europe became battlegrounds where supporters and opponents fought about the right way to end the play and the right way to judge Nora.

The German theater audience in particular expressed their discontent with the ending and for quite some time the famous actress Hedwig Niemann-Raabe, who was to become *the* German Nora, was considered to have "forced" Ibsen to write an alternative ending for the German premiere in Flensburg in February 1880 (Dzulko 1952, 44–45). This alternative ending by Ibsen shows Nora at the moment she is about to leave. Her husband leads her into the nursery where the children are sleeping. The sight of the couple's dreaming offspring makes Nora rethink her decision to leave. Helmer sighs and the curtain falls.

The question of why Ibsen gave into demands for a new ending requires closer investigation. First and foremost, he wrote it as an alternative; the original ending was not cut. In addition, we know from Ibsen's letters published in the Norwegian newspaper *Nationaltidene* (February 20, 1880) that he was far from satisfied with this solution and hoped "this barbaric act of violence against the play" (Østved 1976, 181) would not appear attractive to theaters and that they would rather opt for the slamming-door finale. With this new ending, Ibsen was reacting to requirements made by several theaters, claiming the changes were merely executed in order to prevent other, even more "barbaric" endings.

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

One could argue that in doing so, Ibsen allowed the many “authors” of a theatrical event to become visible. As I have mentioned, the German actress Hedwig Niemann-Raabe seems to have played an important part in this process. After she read the play, she is said to have refused to take on the leading part, arguing that she, unlike Nora, would never leave her children, under any circumstances. One could argue that this position reflects upon the actress’s conservative philosophy centering around “classic” images of marriage, family, and motherhood. However, if one takes into account that the social standing of actresses at that time was still rather low, or at least ambivalent, Niemann-Raabe’s refusal to exit by slamming the door might allow for more multifaceted interpretations. One could also argue that Niemann-Raabe did not defend an old-fashioned understanding of a woman’s role within the family, but reasoned much more from an actress’s point of view: Nora leaving her husband and children did not appear particularly likely to her, and thus Ibsen’s original ending did not represent a “realistic” take on life. However one looks at her decision to demand a new ending, Niemann-Raabe’s involvement highlights her active role in the process of producing the drama for the stage. She had become a German theater star and could afford to work independently (Hanssen 2018, 71), touring with “her” roles all over the country. As she was regarded vital to the play’s success, Niemann-Raabe could use her standing to “intervene” and have the ending adapted according to her ideas.

However, as Christian Janss has shown recently, it is important to consider that more players were actively involved in this process of changing the ending: it was neither solely the actress Hedwig Niemann-Raabe, nor the “powerless” author, who could not do anything in a time when copyright issues were not on the agenda. Janss argues that Wilhelm Lange and Heinrich Laube, in particular, played a major role in the decision, highlighting the importance of both the translator and the director. Janss convincingly shows the impact these changes had and how widely traveled the new ending(s) were (Janss 2017, 5–14).

CLEMENS RÄTHEL

Furthermore, Ibsen's own "new" ending was not the only one produced. In Germany, where the play saw a number of diverse stagings (Kühne 2004, 56), further alternatives were composed. Again, Berlin, with its numerous competing theaters, served as an arena in which the audience could witness the different *Noras*. The play premiered in 1880 at Berlin's Residenztheater with Ibsen's alternative ending. The audience, well aware of the original, objected to this version and demanded changes. In order to respond to the protests, the theater decided to show the original ending, again much to the discontent of the public (Pasche 1979, 191). Even the critics seemed to agree that a reconciliatory fourth act was missing. In response to these demands, a third ending was staged. This alternative to the alternative takes place a year after the original ending: Kristine Linde, by now married to Krogstad, is working as a seamstress in order to contribute to the family's income. Clearly, she has not accepted the job offered to her at the bank; the position is still held by her husband. Linde comes to visit Nora with a present: a little dress for the Helmers' newly born fourth child. The atmosphere is light and happy until Helmer enters. With a worried expression, Nora asks him whether he has finally forgiven her. Her husband does not answer, but smiles at her while taking a bag of macaroons out of his pockets. He picks one of the "lustful" sweets (Schnurbein 2019, 67), which in the beginning he forbade Nora to eat since such things would ruin her teeth, and puts it into Nora's mouth. Whereas she rejoices: "Das Wunderbarste!" ("The most wonderful thing!")—and the curtain slowly falls (Gran 1928, 245). Thus, the macaroons, which Nora secretly eats during the play despite her husband's warning, in this new ending become a symbol of economic and moral control. Hardly understandable today, this 1880 solution became quite a success in Berlin, and even though (or maybe because) it was not approved by Ibsen, the critics were satisfied.

This appetite for alternative finales, the question of how to end the play, still seem to be highly relevant, at least in the German-speaking theater world. Ever since the German

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

premiere, the redecoration of the doll's house and the refashioning of the slamming door have proven highly attractive for actors, directors, critics, and audience alike. The reasons are likely manifold; I aim to highlight some of them with the help of the two productions from Berlin.

SCHAUBÜHNE: NORA AND THE GUN

Thomas Ostermeier's *Nora* premiered in November 2002 at Schaubühne in Berlin.¹ It was Ostermeier's first encounter with Ibsen and it became the starting point to what has now evolved into an international theater export success: Ibsen—Ostermeier—Schaubühne. This combination has attracted the theater world ever since (Helland 2015, 12–14). The production furthermore helped in shaping the spirit of the new Schaubühne in the formative years of Ostermeier's leadership (Pelechová 2011, 383). This *Nora*, as the play is commonly titled in Germany, takes the audience into a very modern, bourgeois setting. Ostermeier sets the play into the world of (newly) rich bankers, always afraid of losing their hard-earned social standing. A world of high-end electronic devices and a picture-perfect family. The couple's nanny is an au pair girl, the children impeccably dressed in designer clothes, and even the parents contribute their fair share to modernizing the drama: for the party, Nora dresses up as Lara Croft and her tarantella dance becomes a superheroine's wild outburst of emotions.

Most notably, the new *Nora* came alive in the impressive scenery. Set designer Jan Pappelbaum built an overly clean loft that could have been located in any big Western European city. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, it primarily served as a clear reference to the changing social structure in Berlin: the nouveau riche slowly conquering the rough and dirty parts of the German capital, cleaning it up with money. Whole quarters of the city, such as the formerly working class and then party district Prenzlauer Berg, were renovated and changed into a gleamingly pretty and family friendly part of

CLEMENS RÄTHEL

town. Nora and Helmer's loft would have been perfectly located there. Pappelbaum traces early gentrification in eastern parts of Berlin by constructing an open living space for the couple, almost sterile. A multilevel apartment with a huge aquarium center stage, a white leather sofa, and a fairly modern American kitchen. The lavish setting would "easily provide illustrations for a magazine on contemporary interior design" (Carlson 2004, 60). Rooms on many levels, sliding glass doors, and stairs connecting the different levels are characteristic of this elegant and elaborate high-tech apartment. In addition, this setting is built on a turntable stage, allowing for a multitude of different angles and perspectives throughout the evening. However, the economic pressure that the characters face, and which Ostermeier himself regarded as key to the understanding of Ibsen's dramatic works more generally—the "motor of the play" (Ostermeier 2010, 69)—is hardly visible in this setting. The Schaubühne Helmers appear far too rich for the audience to understand their economic difficulties.

In addition to the translation of the setting, or, rather, the translation of the play into a modern or postmodern world, Ostermeier directed a new ending for the piece: Nora shoots Helmer. Several times. He falls backward with his left arm and his head entering the huge fish tank. Nora fires again and then removes Torvald's wedding ring from the dead body. This "final statement of rupture" (Carlson 2004, 61), the image of the protagonist putting the cleaned gun onto the white sofa, can be regarded as one of the most memorable images from this production. While she leaves the apartment, hesitant of where to go, Helmer's body drifts in the central aquarium and the couple's nanny takes the children off stage.

Anne Tismer's brilliant performance as the protagonist, Lars Eidinger as Doktor Rank, and Jörg Hartmann's Helmer wowed the crowd and earned the production an invitation to the prestigious Berliner Theatertreffen, where every year ten outstanding productions are shown and hailed as the German-speaking theater's *crème de la crème*. Interestingly enough, the same year a

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

very different *Nora* premiered in Hamburg, a production directed by Stephan Kimmig,² in which, it seems, the cigarette-smoking protagonist would be staying with the family (Herrmann 2005, 64). Both these productions were shown during the Berliner Theatertreffen in 2003, allowing the audience to compare the different endings, the different ways of reading the world. Clearly, Ostermeier's finale was an attempt to finish the play as "unexpected[ly] and shocking as the original" (Carlson 2004, 61) while Kimmig's mise-en-scène was more oriented toward Ibsen's alternative ending.

Judging from the reception, Ostermeier won this battle of the *Noras*. The press celebrated the play's new finale as highly innovative and the production has been shown all over the world, shaping the image of modern German *Regietheater* (director's theater) in the twenty-first century. Locally, however, it very much shaped the (im-)possibilities of staging *Nora* at all in Berlin. It took more than twelve years until another theater dared to give *A Doll's House* a chance—with a new ending, of course.

DEUTSCHE THEATER: AN IBSEN PLAY WITHOUT IBSEN

The second production I am focusing on premiered in December 2015 at the famous Deutsches Theater Berlin.³ This *Nora* was directed by Stefan Pucher, a quite well-known German theater director, who had previously worked both with Ibsen plays and at Deutsches Theater. The long-standing Ibsen tradition of this particular stage is well documented, not least by the fact that in 1906, Max Reinhardt, then head of the theater, had the *Kammerspiele* built for the dramas of Ibsen and Strindberg, a building especially designed for the naturalistic plays of the famous Scandinavian authors (Dreifuss 1983, 153–57). Thus, this new, more intimate theater—an "addition" to the main stage—was opened with Ibsen's *Ghosts*, directed by Reinhardt himself. The stage was designed with the help of Edvard Munch (Weigel 1999, 105).

CLEMENS RÄTHEL

However, Pucher's production was shown on the bigger main stage and is of particular interest when it comes to questions of redecoration and the relation to the Schaubühne production. The theater advertised the play as *Nora* by Henrik Ibsen, even though there is very little Ibsen in it. More than 80% of the evening consists of newly written material by Armin Petras, a highly productive and successful German playwright and theater director. Furthermore, extracts from Theodor Fontane's novel *Effi Briest* (1896) in the filmed version by Rainer Werner Fassbinder⁴ from 1974 are added. Every now and then, dialogs from Ibsen's "original" take center stage in pre-produced films shown in black and white, featuring the cast of the production.

Armin Petras, Henrik Ibsen, Theodor Fontane, Rainer Werner Fassbinder—the Deutsches Theater offers a multitude of (male) authors for its *Nora*, and I have not even mentioned all the authors and composers of the musical pieces that form an essential part of the production. This rather crowded affair was, not unlike the Schaubühne production, transformed into a modernized scenery, designed by Barbara Ehnes. Annabelle Witt was responsible for the costumes. The opening stage directions of the written text clearly indicate where the action takes place.

/die scene ist eine ziemlich grosse altbauwohnung in einem in-viertel einer europäischen grosstadt/in etwa drei wochen wird die sanierung/renovierung fertig sein/alle würden hier gern wohnen/(Petras 2015, 0)

/the stage is a rather big apartment located in a popular part of a European city/the renovation will be finished in about three weeks/everyone would love to live here/⁵

Similarly to the Schaubühne production, the audience peers into an open, airy, and highly stylish apartment with sliding doors and an open kitchen. The only irritation seems to be the ongoing renovation process, visible on stage and often commented on in the text. The contemporary impression is further underlined by the use of "updated" props and topics: there are, of course, no letters to be read and destroyed. Instead, tablet computers find their ways onto stage. Kristine Linde, highlighting her competence to work for Helmer, refers to her excellent

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

social media skills and, in order to underline her determination to get the job, she performs Donna Summer's well-known song "She Works Hard for the Money."

More generally, the language used by the characters appear to imitate more modern ways of communication: short sentences, mainly one-liners, ellipses, and the use of slang and swear words, which is characteristic of text messages, tweets, or even emails. And even if the audience might not get to see it, I also find the spelling in the written text attempting to mirror contemporary practices, as here Petras refrains from differentiating between capital and small initial letters (normally very important in German) and hardly uses any form of punctuation. The scene right in the beginning, when Kristine Linde and Nora meet for the first time after a long absence, illustrates how these above-mentioned modifications work.

linde

guten tag nora

nora

tag

linde

erinnerst du dich nicht mehr an mich

nora

ehrlich gesagt

nee was

christine

gibt's nicht

du altes miststück

linde

ja ich bins

nora

und ich hab dich nicht erkannt verdammt

aber wo sind denn deine haare hin

was ist denn das für ein schnitt

halleluja holy jesus

linde

neun..zehn jahre

nora

ja

the best years of my life

ich hab jetzt drei kleine schreihäse mittelklein

linde

ich weiss

CLEMENS RÄTHEL

nora

und mein mann wird nächstes jahr

linde

ich weiss

nora

und jetzt bist du hier in die city gekommen du landei aus dem hohen norden
mitten im winter (Petras 2015, 9–10)

linde

hello nora

nora

hi

linde

don't you remember me

nora

Honestly no oh

christine

can't believe it

old trout

linde

yep it's me

nora

damm didn't even recognize you

what happened to your hair

what kind of cut is that

halleluja holy jesus

linde

nine..ten years

nora

yes

the best years of my life

i have three little ankle-biters now medium size

linde

i know

nora

and next year my husband is getting

linde

i know

nora

and you've just arrived in the city you redneck from the north in the middle
of winter

This hardly qualifies as a modernized translation. Petras does not aim at taking up the complex use of language and referencing in Ibsen's drama, something Heitmann labeled as "doppelbödige Alltagssprache" ("ambiguous everyday language") (Heitmann 2012, 10). In addition, the production shortens the

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

storyline quite drastically—when it comes to Dr. Rank and Krogstad, to an extent that it may even be difficult for an audience unfamiliar with the plot to figure out their places in the play. The intrigues connected to these characters barely seem to make any sense, and the same applies to Dr. Rank's untimely death. One never gets to know why he has to die. This appears, however, to be less important to the production since the whole *mise-en-scène* more or less centers around the question of how to end it. The renovation on stage, as part of the plot, mirrors the redecoration of the text and thus the play itself, which, with all its modifications, cuts, and additions, almost appears like a prelude to the ending.

In this newly written version of *A Doll's House*, Nora is staying with her husband and family, not in a setting of reconciliation, but one of depression and hopelessness.

nora

machs gut helmer

ich hau jetzt ab

helmer

ich hab dir noch soviel zu sagen

nora

ich weiss

machs gut (Katrin⁶ wendet sich kurz ab, bleibt aber)

helmer

nora

nora

ja

helmer

du verstehst die gesellschaft nicht (Musikeinsatz) (Petras 2015, 87)

nora

take care helmer

i'm off

helmer

so much i wanna tell you

nora

i know

take care (Katrin⁷ turns away, but stays)

helmer

nora

nora

yes

helmer

CLEMENS RÄTHEL

you don't understand society (music)

Helmer's last line already indicates that there will not be any breakup. Nora does not respond to that directly. There is no slamming door, no break with her past. Instead, as a reply, she sings the song "My Least Favorite Life," originally performed by Lera Lynn and used in the HBO series *True Detective*. Nora starts to sing alone, but soon the other characters join in by video playback, implicating that everyone will be staying, with no hopes but also no fears for the future. In a way, this ending shows a disenchanted, hazy society. Stagnation instead of awakening. Lingering *dramatis personae*, with nowhere to go and everywhere to stay.

We're wandering in the shade
And the rustle of fallen leaves
A bird on the edge of a blade
Lost now, my love, in a sweet memory

This is my least favorite life
The one where you fly and I don't
A kiss holds a million deceits
And a lifetime goes up in smoke

This is my least favorite you
Who floats far above earth and stone
The nights that I twist on the rack
Is the time that I feel most at home

I'm wandering in the shade
And the rustle of fallen leaves
A bird on the edge of the blade
Lost now forever, my love, in a sweet memory (Petras 2015, 88)

THEATER AND MULTIPLE AUTHORSHIP

The ending of this production differs significantly from Ostermeier's, but it simultaneously plays with it, as it plays with the multitude of endings produced throughout time. It alters the alteration, and by changing not only the ending but also the written text, at least to a great extent, this redecoration becomes rather extensive. The need or the urge to reinvent the play again

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

and again, beyond the means of modernization, appears remarkable, as with every new production, it seems, the question of how to end the piece becomes key. The answer to that question plays with the original ending(s), but does so to the same degree with interpretations of other productions. In other words: staging *A Doll's House* always means staging theater and theater traditions. I want to argue that *Nora* may have become a play about theater and its modes of production. In this reading, the sensation the piece evokes derives less from the portrayal and criticism of social norms and gender inequality, and much more so from its breaking and playing with theater norms, traditions, and established narrations.

This does not belittle Ibsen or the play—rather, it takes into account the way we deal with the piece today: first and foremost we meet the plot on stage, in the theaters. While the two stagings I have discussed here in greater detail are very much productions of contemporary theater, almost too perfect examples of what is called German *Regietheater*, I argue that as both these productions cast light on the issue of authorship, they can help to address our way of thinking and analyzing theater more generally.

As I have shown, the *mise-en-scènes* at Schaubühne and Deutsches Theater emphasize that theater is an art form involving a multitude of authors: directors, actors, playwrights, musicians, costume-, stage- and light-designers, and many more. In addition, the audience takes on an important role in the theatrical event (Fischer-Lichte 1983, 16), and must therefore be ascribed part of the authorship as well. However, discussing issues of authorship in connection with performative undertakings is neither new, nor does it emerge for the first time at the beginning of the twenty-first century: with Gottsched, Lessing, Schlegel, and others urging for a “*Literarisierung des Theaters*” (Fischer-Lichte 1993, 88–93) in the eighteenth century, they elevated the author to become the central figure of the theatrical event. The written drama was considered the key element of performances, demanding the actors blend with the *dramatis personae* and, in doing so, that they embody the authors’ intentions

(Fischer-Lichte 2001, 12–13). This position was again challenged and transformed with demands to re-theatricalize theater (Roselt 2005, 34–35), mirroring the importance of the *mise-en-scène* over the text and thus paving the way for the rise of the director toward the beginning of the twentieth century (Marker and Marker 1996, 227–242). Simultaneously, the avant-garde movement, considering the written texts to be material to work with and to change if needed, gained influence and further questioned the position of the playwright. The current wave of postdramatic theater takes that approach further by building on multiple and multimedial sources for theatrical events.

These developments within theater have been discussed extensively and in manifold ways; hence, I have opted to portray this well-established theater historical knowledge only briefly here. However, this condensed version already points out that questions of authorship have been dealt with, for the most part, on a theoretical level, and, furthermore, have always been subject to hierarchization: many of these considerations are made by authors or directors addressing their concepts of theater rather than delivering descriptions of performance esthetics and traditions of their time. Noticeable voices of actresses, actors, and other performers are often absent in theater historiography—very often due to the lack of material—, while their impact on theatrical events can hardly be underestimated. Thus, it seems to me, theater historical narratives often (need to) flatten ambivalent esthetic developments and stage practices. Moreover, these narratives tend to imply a structure that ranks either the author (the written text), the director (the theatrical text), or the performers (the physical text) first, superior to other contributors to the theatrical event.

This rough summary of stage practices and esthetics of course cannot do justice to the intricate, multifaceted, and indeed very heterogeneous ways of producing theater in the past. Nevertheless, it may help to understand polyphonic authorship as key to stage performance. With that in mind, the recent Berlin redecorations of Ibsen's *Nora* can also be understood as a

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

way of questioning theatrical authorship anew. As I have shown, staging *A Doll's House* is both an interpretation of the play and an interpretation of previous *mise-en-scènes*. When Ibsen opened his play to alterations and thus to other forms of authorship—voluntarily or not—he, in a way, brought his doll's house “back home” to the theater by allowing different voices to be heard on stage. The intense discussions and the amount of academic work evolving around the question of who is to be made responsible for the “changes” and the multiple endings, however, also imply that theatrical authorship in this case is first and foremost attributed to the playwright. The quest for truth behind the adaptations and different endings, the search for perpetrators to be held responsible for seemingly violating the “true” ending, thus might reveal more about our understanding of theatrical processes and (male) authorship than it is directed to reading performances of the play. However, the two Berlin productions I have discussed here highlight that the ongoing processes of redecoration involve and require a multitude of authors. The staging at Deutsches Theater, surely not altogether convincing, with its overlapping levels of authorship and its obvious references to the Schaubühne *mise-en-scène*, especially invites us to apply Martha Woodmansee's collective approach to authorship. Her essay *On the Author Effect. Recovering Collectivity* (1994) addresses issues of copyright and aims at bringing together approaches from literary studies and law. Her main argument, however, promises fruitful insight for theater studies as well: intermedial forms of (artistic) communication and the increasing impact of social media requires us, according to Woodmansee, to rethink the connection between authorship and intellectual property, closely connected to the printed book. Instead, she suggests (a return to) collective approaches to authorship, refraining from concepts of one “originator” or the hierarchizing of multiple authors and, as a consequence, refashioning the (post-)modern conception of authorship more generally.

Applied to the above analyzed stagings of *Nora*, Woodmansee's point of departure allows us to let performative

processes take center stage with all the authors involved: *A Doll's House's* recognition and attraction derives mainly from productions of the drama rather than readings of the "book." The two examples do not, of course, allow for a comprehensive analysis of *A Doll's House* endings. Neither is my performative approach aimed at erasing Ibsen from the cover of the play. It does, however, take into account the multiple entanglements of performances. The production at Deutsches Theater can be regarded as an especially helpful example: we find the "obvious" authors, such as Ibsen himself, and Armin Petras, who adapted the play. The connections between Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest* and *A Doll's House* have been previously discussed (Brunner 2007, 107–112) and thus Fassbinder's film can be read as a (particularly German) addition to the otherwise reduced plot. I have also highlighted the importance of music in the play and thus the composers need to be regarded as authors as well—after all, the ending, "My Least Favorite Life," is a performance of a song. As less obvious authors, I would count in the director, the actresses, and actors, the stage, costume and light designers, as well as the audience.

Looking more closely at the ending of this staging, one might wonder why Nora decided to stay, which in a way resembles the alternative ending Ibsen sanctioned, with all the implications of who could be responsible for that. But it can also be read as an answer to the Schaubühne staging. After the decision to let Nora shoot her husband, letting Nora stay—the option chosen by Deutsches Theater—might appear the more radical decision at this point. Thus, Ostermeier and his company and all their predecessors up to Niemann-Raabe and Laube must be, I would argue, ascribed part of the collective authorship—even though they are almost invisible—in this particular evening as well. Piling authorships upon authorships and connecting them through space and time, is not, I argue, an outcome of the play's popularity. Rather, I read it as a precondition of the play's success and relevance, as it invites (or almost requires) multiple authors to write on, to continue the theatrical processes of redecorating the

Redecorating A Doll's House in Contemporary German Theater

mentioned performative spaces. Understanding these ongoing processes as essential in performative works may allow for a broader understanding of (theatrical) authorship. This, of course, complicates research since the transitory character of theatrical events makes it particularly difficult to approach and work on them. Nevertheless, I am sure it is a task worth undertaking.

NOTES

1. This production premiered November 26th 2002 at Schaubühne Berlin. The stage was designed by Jan Pappelbaum, costumes by Almut Eppinger. Cast: Anne Tismer (Nora Helmer), Jörg Hartmann (Torvald Helmer), Jenny Schily (Christine Linde), Lars Eidinger (Dr. Niels Rank), Kay Bartholomäus Schulze (Lars Krogstad).
2. This production premiered September 12th 2002 at Thalia Theater Hamburg. The stage was designed by Katja Haß, costumes by Anja Rabes. Cast: Susanne Wolff (Nora Helmer), Norman Hacker (Torvald Helmer), Victoria Trauttmannsdorf (Christine Linde), Christoph Bantzer (Dr. Niels Rank), Stephan Schad (Lars Krogstad).
3. This production premiered December 4th 2015 at Deutsches Theater. The stage was designed by Barbara Ehnes, costumes by Annabelle Witt. Cast: Katrin Wichmann (Nora Helmer), Bernd Moss (Torvald Helmer), Tabea Bettin (Christine Linde), Daniel Hoevens (Dr. Niels Rank), Moritz Grove (Lars Krogstad).
4. Fassbinder himself produced his version *A Doll's House* in a film called *Nora Helmer* in 1973 (Brunner 1998).
5. Note that all translations from the Deutsches Theater production are by the author of this article.
6. Katrin refers to the name of the actress playing Nora.
7. Ibid.

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CLEMENS RÄTHEL

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

CLEMENS RÄTHEL Postdoc at the Department of Northern European studies (Nordeuropa-Institut), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, with a focus on Scandinavian literature and theater from the 19th to 21st century. E-mail: clemens.raethel@hu-berlin.de.