



NEWS RELEASE

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COMMONWEAL THEATRE COMPANY ANNOUNCES 18TH ANNUAL IBSEN FESTIVAL

LANESBORO, MN. — The Commonwealth Theatre Company announces its 18th Annual Ibsen Festival April 17-19 in downtown Lanesboro. Named for Henrik Ibsen, the acclaimed “Father of Modern Drama,” the Festival is a celebration of Scandinavian theatre, visual art, music and dance, centered amidst the opening of Commonweal’s annual Ibsen production. This yearly gathering of artists and craftsmen was honored in 2008 by the Norwegian Government, who awarded the Commonwealth Theatre one of only four inaugural International Ibsen Scholarships in recognition of its ongoing commitment to producing the works of Ibsen, one of the world’s premiere playwrights.

Highlighting this year’s festival is the opening of a world premiere adaptation of Ibsen’s *The Master Builder* on Saturday, April 18 at 7:30 pm. The action of the play focuses on Halvard Solness, a successful but dangerously narcissistic architect. His obsession with the past and fear of the future make one of Ibsen’s final masterworks a must-see. The play is adapted by Minnesota playwright Jeffrey Hatcher and directed by guest artist Lee Gundersheimer, the managing director of Great River Shakespeare Festival. Commonwealth resident ensemble member Scott Dixon will play the lead role of Solness. The cast also

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includes Commonweal ensemble members Hal Cropp, David Hennessey, and Ana Hagedorn along with guest artists Ellen Apel, Claire Richards and Brandt Roberts. Stage Manager Bailey Otto leads the production team which includes Kit Mayer (set design), Jason Lee Resler (costume design), Matthew Vichlach (sound design), Theresa Crozier (puppet design), Greg Neidhardt (composer) and Thomas White (lighting design).

The Master Builder is Hatcher's sixth Ibsen adaptation created for the Commonweal. A renowned American playwright, his credits include *Compleat Female Stage Beauty*, *Scotland Road* and *Three Viewings*, along with adaptations of Jean Anouilh's *To Fool the Eye* and Henry James' *Turn of the Screw*. This world-premiere production is one in a series of new Ibsen adaptations he and the Commonweal have developed for the American stage, beginning with *John Gabriel Borkman*, *An Enemy of the People*, *Pillars of Society*, *A Doll's House* and last season's *Brand*. The production of *The Master Builder* runs through June 13 at the theatre in downtown Lanesboro.

The Ibsen Festival offers events and presentations throughout the weekend to allow guests to experience Norwegian culture through a variety of ways. The Commonweal is proud to welcome Dr. Marvin Carlson and Darrell Henning to deliver two special lectures. Dr. Carlson is The Sidney E. Cohn Distinguished Professor of Theatre, Comparative Literature and Middle Eastern Studies at The Graduate Center, City University of New York. His research and teaching interests include dramatic theory and Western European theatre history and dramatic literature, especially of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. In 2005, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Athens. His best-known book, *Theories of the Theatre*, has been translated into seven languages. His 2001 book, *The Haunted Stage*, won the Calloway Prize. His newest book is the *Theatres of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia* with Khalid Amine. As the festival keynote speaker, Dr. Carlson will present his lecture entitled *Solness's Faustian Bargain*.

Darrell Henning graduated from the University of Missouri with a B.A. in anthropology/archaeology and earned his M.A. in history museum studies at the Cooperstown Graduate Program in New York. He worked at the Nassau County Historical Museum (Old Bethpage Village Restorations), Long Island, New York for five years, before returning to Decorah as curator of Vesterheim. While in New York he received a New York Arts Council grant to study barn and rural architecture on Long Island. At

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Vesterheim, he received a National Humanities Grant to study rural architecture in Norway. He retired from Vesterheim in 2001, after serving as curator, director, and again as curator. Henning has published articles on Norwegian-American architecture and Vesterheim's collection and presented papers in both Norway and the United States, notably at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and the Norsk Institutt for Kulturminneforskning in Oslo, Norway. Henning's lecture will focus on Norwegian American Domestic Architectural Styles. A complete schedule of festival events is available at www.ibsenfest.org.

Funding for Commonweal Theatre's programming is provided in part by a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, through an appropriation by the Minnesota State Legislature, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and private funders. For more details, including information about schedules, tickets, and other Commonweal programs, visit www.commonwealtheatre.org or call the Box Office at (800) 657-7025.

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