

Acceptance Speech, Banquet, International Ibsen Conference, Skien, Norway, September 7

I am exceedingly grateful to Norway's sovereign, King Harald, for the high honor of being named Commander in the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit. It will be my great pleasure to express my gratitude to the king himself.

My award is for distinction in "disseminating Norwegian culture abroad," which in my case mostly means my work on Ibsen, and secondarily Munch, in the United States. I need not tell you that the current condition of the country is dire, but I am happy to report that Ibsen is alive and well, playing his part in the opposition to the autocratic White House. As you know, *An Enemy of the People* has been, since its writing in 1882, a "go-to" play in times of political turmoil—the most famous example is Stanislavsky's production during the Karensky government—and in the last year in the States, there have been three major productions: at the Guthrie in Minneapolis, the Goodman in Chicago, and the Yale Repertory. Another production opens in the fall on Broadway.

On a scholarly level, I am happy to report that the Ibsen Society of America journal *Ibsen News and Comment*, which I edit, will be archived in JSTOR. Forty years of *INC*, from 1980 to the present, will soon be available on the most important Humanities data base in the world. Olivia Gunn, the ISA President, and Dean Krouk, Vice President, and I are now working on this project. I can also report that there are more sessions on Ibsen at the annual meetings of SASS—Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study—than on any other author.

Finally, I would like to add a personal note: This honor is especially meaningful to me because for the last forty years, Ibsen has been the center of my life: researching and writing on Ibsen, lecturing on Ibsen around the world, working on Ibsen productions, and organizing Ibsen meetings and conferences. It has been and continues to be a wonderful ride. It is Ibsen who has taught me the lesson that Oswald tries to teach his mother in *Ghosts*: the joy of life and the joy of work are the same.

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