Dear ISA members:

Normally, I would be writing to update you about spring happenings, including the annual ISA panel at the SASS conference. Either you already know, or won’t be surprised to hear, that the panel and conference did not take place. Like so many other events, SASS 2020 in Puerto Rico was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I express my sympathy for the organizers. Luckily, their hours of service will not be in vain, as the conference has been rescheduled for spring 2022. In the meantime, the show must go on, which means that planning for an ISA panel at SASS 2021 in Seattle is already underway. It remains to be seen whether we will be able to meet in person. I imagine we will be learning a lot about creative ways for putting conferences online in the coming months.

The theme for SASS 2020 was “Postcolonial Entanglements.” The ISA Council selected the theme “Ibsen & Empire” to complement that theme, asking scholars to contemplate connections between Ibsen’s oeuvre and “legacies of colonization, imperialism and slavery,” in dramatic and theatrical practices. If you were scheduled to present, please plan to come to Puerto Rico in 2022. It is likely that additional proposals will be considered by the ISA Council. The SASS organization will communicate more information about procedures for re-registering and submitting proposals this coming spring.

The theme for the 2021 SASS conference in Seattle will be “Economies and Ecologies.” To complement this theme, the ISA Council has chosen “Ibsen & Interdependence” for our panel. Ibsen is often regarded as a thinker of liberal or radical individualism, whose works emphasize the primary value of personal independence and autonomy. His works can also be used to think in various ways about interdependence, whether this means within human groups and collectivities, or more broadly in terms of ecological and human-animal relations. In which ways does Ibsen recognize and value interdependence, despite his reputation for praising autonomy above all else? In which ways might his works undervalue interdependence, to what end, and at what cost? How might we read Ibsen against the grain of his own reputation for undervaluing interdependence? I will include the CFP and information about submitting proposals on the ISA website and in my fall letter. In the meantime, feel free to reach out to me with any questions.

In international Ibsen news, The University of Oslo’s Centre for Ibsen Studies has undergone substantial changes in staffing over the past five years, such that ISA members may want to update their points of contact. Former Head of the Centre, Frode Helland, is currently serving a term as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. Professor Ellen Reese, a long-time faculty member, has taken over as Head. The rest of the academic staff includes associate professor Giuliano D’Amico and visiting associate professor Liyang Xia, as well as two recent Ph.D. graduates, Gianina Druta and Thor Holt, on short-term contracts. Last year Nina Evensen joined the Centre in a newly-established data steward position with responsibility for expanding and improving the Centre’s documentation resources together with librarian Kristin Kosberg, who also joined the Centre last year. Ragnhild Schea is at the administrative helm of the Centre. Links to contact information and profiles can be found here: https://www.hf.uio.no/is/english/people/

This spring the Centre launched a major new initiative to dramatically improve its online research infrastructure. The ultimate goal is to make all of their digital holdings fully interoperable and partner with external organizations to create a seamless Virtual Ibsen Platform that will grant researchers around the world open access to greatly expanded Ibsen documentation and source materials. Look for small but
important improvements to the IbsenStage relational database by the end of summer, and much more substantial and groundbreaking changes in the next few years.

Looking forward, the ISA Council plans to continue awarding ISA student prizes. This year’s (2020-2021) deadlines for the Undergraduate Essay Prize and Graduate Travel Stipend are 20 June 2021 and 30 March 2021, respectively. If you teach Ibsen and your students write about his works, please encourage them to apply. For further instructions, check out the Student Prizes Page on our website (https://ibsensociety.org/).

Many people are suffering during this time of social upheaval, inspired and exacerbated by the virus. I hope that you all have access to resources that enable you to cope—whether that means sufficient broadband, some form of contact with loved ones, or a return to Ibsen’s dramas, which ask us to think about revolt as well as reform, about the ongoing process of building things up and razing them down to the ground. I know that you all have stories to tell about how you have coped, what you have lost and gained due to the pandemic, and I hope to be able to share our stories soon.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any concerns, with information to post on the website, or with feedback about aspects of ISA’s communications and resources. Most importantly, please remember to renew your membership (https://ibsensociety.org/membership/) and to keep ISA in mind when you make charitable donations.

Sincerely,

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