

The Ibsen Society of America

President's Letter

January 2021

Dear ISA Members:

The members of the Council of the ISA have been discussing the state of the society. We believe that our organization should rethink some of its priorities and goals and want to consider how we might move forward in an effective way. This letter summarizes the Council's view of how ISA currently serves its members and proposes changes that will, we believe, enhance the work of the organization. With this letter, we wish to solicit your feedback.

Currently, the ISA

- Publishes an annual periodical, *Ibsen News and Comment (INC)*, which features “Ibsen on Stage,” members’ reviews of Ibsen productions in the U.S. and Europe; “Articles on Ibsen,” an annotated bibliography of articles in refereed journals; and “News and Notes,” information on Ibsen conferences and other Ibsen-related events.
- Sponsors an annual panel or panels on Ibsen at the annual conference of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study (SASS), with which the ISA is officially associated.
- Offers a prize for an essay on Ibsen by an undergraduate student as well as travel grants to the SASS conference for graduate students.
- Hosts a website which offers information about the ISA, news about Ibsen activities in the U.S. and elsewhere, the latest issues of *INC*, and a series of pedagogical links, e.g., course syllabi, and educational links, e.g., “Biography of Ibsen,” “Ibsen in Translation.”

Below are some initial ideas and proposals. The ISA Council wishes to be realistic, and, at the same time, to honor the significant history both of the ISA and *INC*.

- Joan Templeton, who has edited *Ibsen News and Comment* for over twenty years, wishes to step down. We know of nobody who wants to take over. *INC* has been an important record both of Ibsen performances and writings on Ibsen since its first appearance in 1980. Its early issues are treasure houses of information, containing interviews with directors and actors like Lee Strasberg, Eva Le Gallienne, and James Earl Jones, as well as scholar/critics like Eric Bentley and Francis Fergusson. From Rolf Fjelde, the first editor, to Joan Templeton, the journal has featured “Ibsen on Stage,” which includes ISA members’ reviews of productions all over America and Europe, e.g., the 2006 Ibsen Centennial issue includes 26 productions from Europe, Canada, and the US. *INC* is now available on JSTOR, bringing a significant new readership and serious revenue to the ISA. It would be a great pity to have to discontinue it. Joan is very willing to work with the new editor. If you are interested, please let us know.
- The membership of the ISA is declining, and the SASS conference, the ISA’s only community-building event, does not attract critics, scholars, or theater practitioners

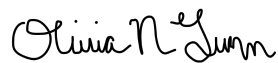
working outside Scandinavian studies; growing the membership of the ISA beyond SASS members is thus very unlikely. However, the ISA panels at SASS have always prospered and continue to do so, and it is essential that we continue this record.

- In recent years, while our grants have supported some graduate students attending SASS, the ISA undergraduate essay prize has received very few applications. We suggest that it makes good sense to transfer the administration of these prizes, funded by the ISA, to SASS, which more widely and systematically advertises its prizes. We might also consider adding independent scholars to those eligible for the travel grants.
- Parts of the current ISA website, launched five years ago, have proven to be overly ambitious. Traditionally, the site has offered organizational information about the ISA, reported on Ibsen news, and offered the latest editions of *INC*. This part of the site continues to function. The new pedagogical and educational links, however, have remained dormant for lack of volunteers. Also, the databases of the Ibsen Center at the University of Oslo, which has a staff to create and maintain its website, have made or will make some of the links outdated or redundant; e.g., the Center has substantial, continually updated databases of Ibsen on film and Ibsen in production. We propose that the ISA website be simplified and streamlined to remove dormant and redundant links.

We value your support and understand that the ISA has meant a great deal to its members for more than 40 years. It has provided a venue for community building among American Ibsen scholars, and it has engaged actively with the Ibsen Center in Oslo, e.g., two of the ISA's Past Presidents—Joan Templeton and Mark Sandberg—have served as presidents of the International Ibsen Committee, the body that organizes the International Ibsen Conferences. But membership in the ISA continues to shrink, and we must consider what we can reasonably do in order to preserve the future of our organization.

Please let us hear from you.

Sincerely,



Olivia Noble Gunn, President, and Members of the ISA Council

ogunn@uw.edu

Members of the Council: Dean Krouk, Vice-President (krouk@wisc.edu); Maren Johnson, Secretary (johnma29@luther.edu); Gergana May, Treasurer (ggmay@indiana.edu); Joan Templeton, Editor, *INC* (joan.templeton8@gmail.com) Members at Large: Mark Sandberg (sandberg@berkeley.edu), Arne Lunde (lunde@humnet.ucla.edu)