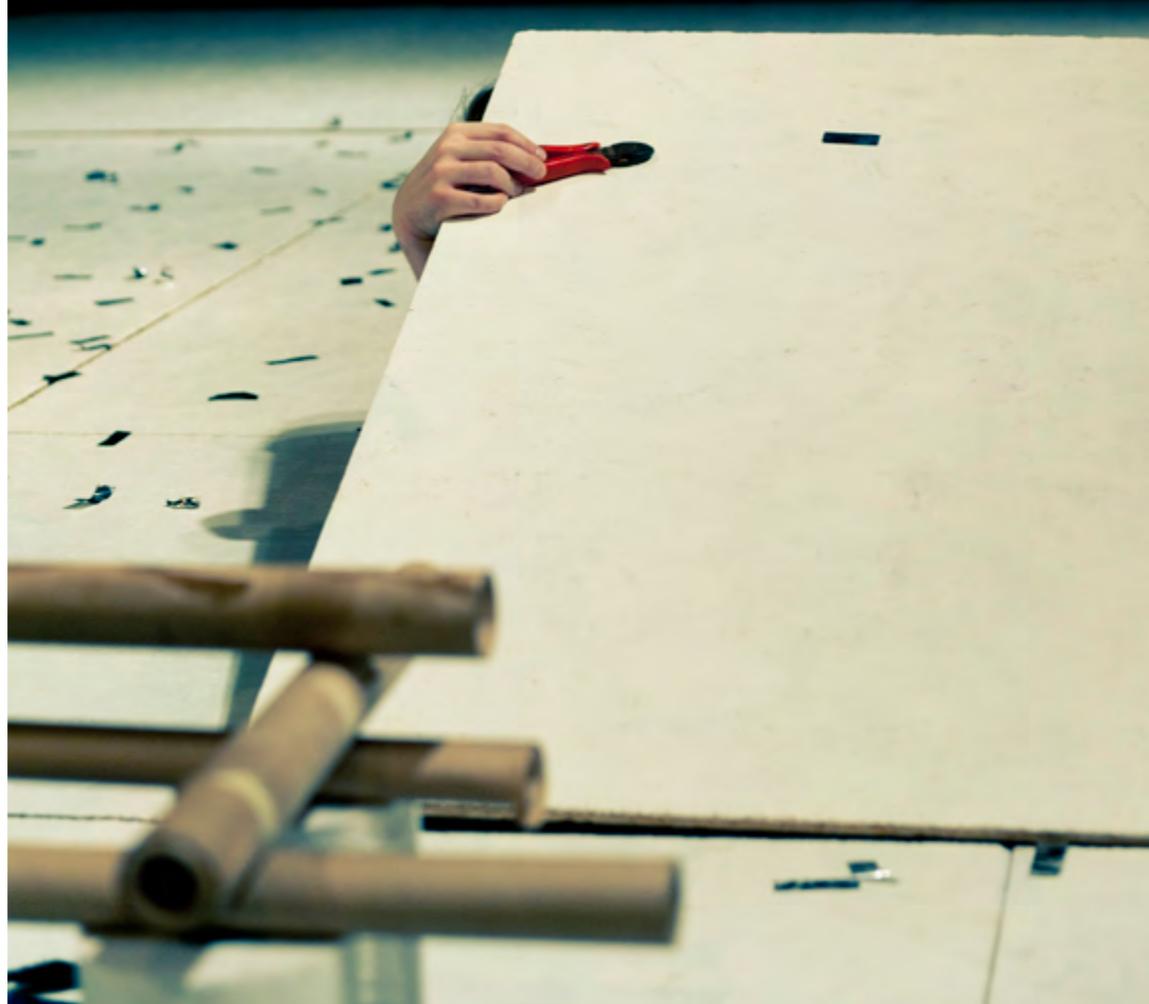


2013 2014 2015

NORWEGIAN DRAMA NOW

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A NEW SPRING FOR NORWEGIAN DRAMA



Dear Reader,

It is with great pleasure that we notice a growing interest in new Norwegian drama both in Norway and abroad. For the last years, Norwegian playwrights have had their work translated into a great many languages, among them English, French, German, Romanian, Polish, Russian, Croatian,

Portuguese, Japanese, Spanish, Macedonian, Swedish, Italian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Dutch, Albanian, Farsi, Chinese, Indonesian and Czech.

Also here at home, we can take pride in an impressive number of premieres at professional venues, approximately 60 a year. The range is huge, from popular comedies on national stages to political plays and documentary pieces in smaller theatres.

In my opinion, we may safely say that we find ourselves in a new golden age for Norwegian stage drama. The 24 playwrights presented here are followed by an

ever-increasing undergrowth: a new generation of talents breathing down their necks, sure to influence Norwegian dramatic arts in the years to come.

The reasons for this surge of talent are complex. One of the reasons for the interest for Norwegian drama abroad, is that extensive and successful efforts have been made by several of our consulates and embassies around the world to raise awareness of Norwegian culture. In this, they have been helped along by the concurrent professionalization which the use of theatrical agents has fostered. In addition, I believe that we are riding on a wave of increased interest in Nordic culture, propelled by other art forms such as film, TV drama, architecture, literature and the visual arts. But this interest, however great, would not have mattered if there had not been a simultaneous increase in the number of playwrights of international renown here in Norway.

Yet another reason for this proliferation of talent is the Norwegian cultural policy of placing great emphasis on cultivating artistic careers over time. In addition to national artists' grants, the Arts Council has earmarked funds for text development, and with the recently established Norwegian Centre for New Playwriting (Dramatikkens hus), Norwegian dramatists

have been given an artistic base where they can work on their texts while being supported by grants for up to two years. Here, they also have the opportunity to experience their latest pieces read from the stage by professional actors to an increasingly interested audience of theatre managers and other industry professionals.

During the last three years, we in the Writers' Guild have stepped up our PR efforts and worked hard to ensure that each playwright gets the attention he or she deserves whenever a play is produced for the first time. This initiative has paid off, and in the past year there has been a marked increase in press coverage concerning playwrights. As we all know, attention often generates more attention, and with that comes an increased interest in both the artists and the plays they write.

Thus, it is not just one single factor but a whole combination of elements that allow us to proclaim a contemporary golden age for Norwegian theatre. May it be long lasting and reach out to engage and inspire more and more people in the years ahead!

Monica Boracco
President, Writers' Guild of Norway



ABRAHAM'S BARN (THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM) BY SVEIN TINDBERG. TRØNDELAG TEATER, TRONDHEIM. PHOTO: DAG JENSSEN.



TRASSALDEREN, BY ANDREAS MARKUSSON. OSLO NYE TEATER. FOTO: L. P. LORENTZ.

NORWEGIAN DRAMA NOW BY IDALOU LARSEN

Henrik Ibsen is Norway's most renowned playwright and, after Shakespeare's, his plays are still the most often performed in the world. For a long time, however, he cast a shadow over new young Norwegian dramatists who had problems freeing themselves from his way of writing.

Many authors chose to write for the theatre after Ibsen and before Jon Fosse. However, their dramatic works are seldom mentioned in literary history, nor are they the objects of new stagings. A very interesting survey of Norwegian drama between 1890 and 2000, written by the historian Ivo de Figueiredo, shows that this is a loss not only for our literary history, but also for our theatre. The book, with the rather enigmatic title *ord/kjøtt* (word/meat), was published in 2014, and I hoped it was going to make directors take an interest in older plays, which – at least as de Figueiredo describes them – still seem to be relevant today. But until now, nothing has happened.

A new chapter in the story of Norwegian drama started with Cecilie Løveid, whose first play premiered at Den Nationale Scene in Bergen in 1982. She is acknowledged as one of the most important women playwrights in Europe after World War II. Her very

poetic plays have been defined as postmodern, as she mixes different dramatic genres in an untraditional way. She has not written any new plays since the very personal *Visning* (The Showing), which she wrote for the National Theatre in Oslo in 2005. It was published the same year, but was not staged until January 2014, and then it only ran for three weeks. However, after both the playwright and the play's director received the Norwegian Critics' Association's Award for 2014, *Visning* had a short revival last December.

12 years after Løveid's debut as dramatist, it was Jon Fosse's turn, and in a very short time he became the most often-performed Norwegian playwright after Ibsen! However, a few months ago he announced that he was probably not going to write for the theatre anymore, but instead concentrate on novels and poetry.

Nearly all Norwegian theatres are publicly funded, but it is still important for them to get good economic results, which means that people must be willing to buy the rather expensive tickets, and it seems to be a fact that audiences prefer plays they already know. This can be one of the reasons why new plays are produced on small stages, and often only for a short period of time: Most theatre managers do not expect such plays to at-

tract large audiences. But sometimes they are wrong. A monologue written by the actor himself, Svein Tinberg, entitled *Abrahams barn* (The Children of Abraham), a personal reflection concerning our culture's three main religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, was seen by more than 75.000 Norwegians! Another one-man show, this one more interested in making fun of contemporary culture, Are Kalvø's *Kalvø – ein time av livet ditt du aldri får tilbake* (Kalvø – An Hour of Your Life You Never Get Back), is also extremely popular, and is still running on the main stage of the Det Norske Teatret. It premiered in October last year, and will be playing into June.

In a way, it is easy to understand why serious modern drama is not so popular: The plays are often innovative and experimental, not primarily meant to entertain. One must also remember that Norway is a small country with a population of only five million, to whom theatre is a relatively new kind of entertainment. Theatre is a fundamentally urban art, but less than a hundred and fifty years ago, most Norwegians did not live in cities, and professional theatre was practically unknown.

Despite the theatre of today being neglected by the media, who are more concerned with writing about sports,

there is an increasing number of theatre performances, with more people attending the theatre than going to football matches, which is a positive development.

It is also a good sign that many talented authors choose to write for the stage. A still better sign is that several of them are also appreciated outside of Norway. For instance, two of Arne Lygre's plays, *Jeg forsvinner* (I Disappear) and *Dager under* (Days Beneath), have both had their world premieres abroad. *Jeg forsvinner* was first staged in Paris in 2011, at the Théâtre National de la Colline, directed by the well-known Stéphane Braunschweig, whose interpretation of *Dager under*, also in 2011, was shown in Berlin and Düsseldorf, then in Paris. *Dager under* had already premiered in 2009 in Odense, Denmark, and afterwards the play toured France with Compagnie Sirènes before being staged in Bern, Switzerland. In November 2014, *Dager under* was finally produced in Norway, at Trøndelag Teater in Trondheim.

The Norwegian repertoire policy contains yet another disappointing trend: It almost never happens that a contemporary play, after having premiered at one theatre, gets a new interpretation in another one. It is difficult to understand why, as new and different stagings undoubtedly would create an increased in-

terest in the playwright and his or her works.

Fortunately, this does not seem to discourage authors from writing for the stage. The Norwegian Center for New Playwriting (Dramatikkens hus) has been established to help young voices develop their talent, and from the autumn of 2013, The Academy of Theatre has been offering professional training to sixteen aspiring playwrights. It is also a good thing that every two years the Norwegian Drama Festival gives young authors a chance to get their texts produced. In June, nine texts by aspiring playwrights will be presented during this year's festival – eight of them written by women! This is indeed a promising tendency in an art traditionally dominated by men. The theatre needs new voices!

IDALOU LARSEN (B. 1935) IS AN ARTS JOURNALIST AND A THEATRE CRITIC.



PHOTO: KETIL BLOM

VAFFELHJARTE BY MARIA PARR. DRAMATIZED BY JESPER HALLE.
DEN NATIONALE SCENE, BERGEN, 2014. PHOTO: THOR BRØDRESKIFT.



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PHOTO: THOR ERIK MATHIESEN



STIG AMDAM IN EN FOLKEFIENDE BY HENRIK IBSEN. DEN NATIONALE SCENE, BERGEN 2011. FOTO: THOR BRØDRESKIFT.

Stig Ryste Amdam (b. 1961). Amdam is an actor as well as a playwright. After graduating from the National Academy of Theatre in 1983, he joined Hålogaland Teater in Tromsø and has been affiliated with Den Nationale Scene in Bergen since 1989. Since his debut as a playwright in 1999, he has written seven pieces, of which *Simons historie* was nominated for the Nordic Drama Prize in 2010. The radio version was later nominated for both the Nordic Radio Play Prize and Prix Europa. The radio drama *Hauk og due* (Hawk and Dove) was awarded the silver medal in the Prix Italia and has also been produced by Czech radio.

“I often write better standing up, it gets shorter that way.”

Maybe it was Stig Amdam’s original profession as an actor that led to his standing method? However that may be, after having been an actor for 16 years, he made his debut as a playwright at the theatre in Molde in 1999 with *Hundredagar* (Dog Days), a play concerned with the power struggle between a son and his parents.

Now permanently employed by Den Nationale Scene in Bergen, Amdam alternates between the roles of actor, playwright and director, a combination which has led him into some chaotic situations: On one occasion, he played the mafia boss in a theatre production of Lars von Trier’s film *Dogville*, while his own play, *Ras* (Avalanche), premiered on a different stage in the same theatre. Earlier that same day, he had received the news that Hålogaland Teater in Tromsø had bought another one of his plays.

As a boy growing up on a farm, Amdam had one main ambition: to become a good footballer. In 2008, he had his breakthrough as a playwright, however, with *Simons historie* (Simon’s Story), the tale of a soldier who, upon his return from Afghanistan, finds

that his war-time experiences are not believed when he recounts them. The play was produced both at Den Nationale Scene in Bergen and as a radio play on NRK. It created a stir when it became known that the Norwegian military had asked to read the script before its premiere. “Under no circumstances,” answered Amdam. “Strong, sincere and insightful, he puts the spotlight on the lingering effects our soldiers can carry in their luggage when returning home from duty in war zones,” wrote Astrid Sletbak in VG when the play opened. Both the stage play and the radio version have been nominated for numerous international awards.

The play *Et bedre sted* (A Better Place) from 2011 deals with a different war, one closer to home: the everyday life of a Jewish family in Bergen during World War II. His most recent play, *Fjordmann*, has been named after the online name used by the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik’s chief source of ideological inspiration. It deals with a quiet young boy who lives at home with his mother but ends up perpetrating a shocking act of violence. The play has been commissioned by Sogn og Fjordane Teater and will open in November 2015.



PHOTO: DAG JENSSEN

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SAMLAGET

Gyrid Axe Øvsteng (b. 1974). Having studied Theater Science, Literature and Dramatic Writing, she debuted in 2000 with the drama *Køyr!* and has since written 17 short and long texts for the stage. Her play *Verkeleg* was nominated for the Norwegian Ibsen Award. Also a writer of children's books, she published her latest, *Førstemamma på Mars* (First Mum on Mars), in 2013, a story about how a child experiences her mum's serious illness. This book brought Øvsteng and illustrator Per Ragnar Møkleby the Norwegian Critics' Association's Award for the best children's book of the year, as well as the Ministry of Culture's Picture Book Prize.

"The music and rhythm of language, and what is said in silence." That is a part of the young dramatist Gyrid Axe Øvsteng's project, according to Sarah Cameron Sunde, who translated Øvsteng's most renowned play *Verkeleg* (Reality) for the Akvavit Theater in Chicago. Øvsteng's work *"is politically and/or philosophically oriented. ... Reality examines the blurred line between playing a role and being played by the role."* In *Verkeleg*, we are in the future, in a world where everyone is sitting in their living-rooms, watching TV and waiting for something to happen:

*Reality is a piece about singing beautifully
About owning a guitar without knowing how to play
About fathers who die of seeing birds fly
About kids who are not kicking
About eyes that see
About eyes that see without seeing*

The play brought Øvsteng a nomination for the Norwegian Ibsen Award.

Øvsteng comes from Vågå in the valley of Gudbrandsdalen, but moved to Skien, the home town of Henrik Ibsen, in the midst of a dramatic labour con-

flict which can be traced back to a proud part of Skien's industrial history. In 2006, the paper mill Union was closed down, after more than 130 years of continuous production, and the community mobilized with tremendous engagement and energy. Øvsteng came to Skien, and set about writing *Papirfly* (Paper Plane), a look into the minds of the people who worked there, or could have worked there: What would they be thinking, in the midst of a liquidation process of which no one knew the outcome? The play was staged in the factory's own space.

Øvsteng's debut came in 2000 with the drama *Køyr!* (Merge!), and she has since written 17 short and long texts for the stage. In one of them, *Gåva* (The Present), we meet Finn and Dag, Hidden, each in his own place, they both wish to be found. Eventually the day comes when Finn and Dag discover one another, resulting in their wrapping each other up like presents.

"None of my pieces are very realistic, but they are still meetings with situations that develop into ideas. I'm a fan of Harold Pinter and Samuel Beckett, and feel that we meet in a way. There's something about the way they express themselves," she has said.



PHOTO: KRISTIN VON HIRSCH

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TILBAKEKOMSTENE (THE RETURNS), THE KEMBALI CREW, ACTORS INCLUDED, INDONESIA. PHOTO: FREDRIK BRATTBERG.

Fredrik Brattberg (b. 1978). Educated as a composer, Brattberg made his debut as a playwright in 2008 with *Det banker, Amadeus* (Somebody's Knocking, Amadeus). He has since had four plays produced in Norway, and in 2012 he received a state scholarship and the Norwegian Ibsen Award for his play *Tilbakekomstene*.

Despite hailing from the industrial city of Porsgrunn, with its vital theatre milieu, Fredrik Brattberg is as much a composer as he is a dramatist, often structuring his plays around a musical composition.

Besøk hos familien Hansen halv syv (A Visit to the Hansen Family at Half Past Six) from 2009 is such a play, built upon the pattern of Maurice Ravel's *Bolero*: While awaiting the arrival of a Muslim man, the Hansen family's attitude slowly progresses from an initially racist stance to an overly anti-racist one. Mirroring the relentless build of the bolero, a xenophobic motif is repeated in the form of various racist statements which bring the subject into the crescendo of an explosive finale.

In 2012, Brattberg's career as a playwright took an unexpected upward turn when he was awarded the prestigious Norwegian Ibsen Award, for his play *Tilbakekomstene* (The Returns).

Again using musical repetition in its construction, *Tilbakekomstene* tells the story of a mother and father mourning the death of their only son – until, suddenly, the doorbell rings and there he stands, dirty, hungry and unable to explain what has happened. The family members restart their daily lives – but then the boy

disappears for a second time, and then a third, etc. The parents' reactions gradually change at each disappearance, eventually revealing the outlines of a dysfunctional family that fails to acknowledge reality.

"Fredrik Brattberg develops what we usually refer to as absurdist theatre and does it with a distinct, clear and independent voice," said the Ibsen Award jury about *Tilbakekomstene*, which has started its journey out into the world. In 2013, it was shortlisted at the European Festival of Contemporary Playwrights in Copenhagen and played in both New York and Bandung in Indonesia. In 2014, it premiered at the Compagnie Divine Comedie in Rouen and was given a reading at Théâtre National de la Colline in Paris.

In the spring of 2015, his most recent play, *Faren til barnet til moren* (The Father of the Child of the Mother), was read at the National Theatre in Oslo. This play tells the story about a father and a mother, and how trivialities can develop into serious conflicts and put both parental roles, gender roles and a love relationship to the test.



RAS (AVALANCHE) BY STIG AMDAM. DEN NATIONALE SCENE, BERGEN 2011. PHOTO: ØYSTEIN KLAKEGG.



THE DAHMER SYNDROME BY M.N. HALLUM. BLACK BOX THEATRE, OSLO 2014. PHOTO: MARIUS MENSINK



PHOTO: KRISTIN VON HIRSCH

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VAFFELHJARTE, DEN NATIONALE SCENE, BERGEN 2014.
PHOTO: THOR BRØDRESKIFT.

Jesper Halle (b. 1956). Born and raised in Oslo, where he resides, Halle studied Philosophy and Literature at the University of Tromsø and Norwegian at the University of Oslo. Since 1983, he has written nearly 30 dramatic works for the theatre, puppet theatre, radio and television. He won the Norwegian Ibsen Award in 1996 for *Dagenes lys* and the Hedda Award in 2004 for *Lilleskogen*.

“Hats off to playwright Jesper Halle,” exclaimed Dagbladet-reviewer Hans Rossiné after the 1996 premiere of *Dagenes lys* (Light of the Days).

Starting with a man trying to learn his mother’s history, it develops into a play which covers four generations of strong women and impossible husbands. The story of a relatively common, yet uncommon, family, the play “tells stories about people, about love, about the disappointments of life, so witty, ironic, revealing, sentimental and nostalgic that the important thing happens: it touches (and moves)”, wrote Rossiné. *Dagenes lys* deservedly brought Jesper Halle the Norwegian Ibsen Award that same year.

A full-time dramatist since his debut in 1983 with *Redd meg, Joe Louis* (Save Me, Joe Louis), Jesper Halle has since written nearly 30 texts for the theatre, puppet theatre, radio and television.

His dramas are often characterized by a seemingly childlike/naïve openness against a deeply serious background. *Lilleskogen* (The Littlewoods), from 2004, begins as an innocent idyll with fun, friendship and a bit of bickering, only to evolve into eerie horror. This is “theatre about children, which is simply not designed for children, but for those of us who survived and be-

came adults,” wrote Dagbladet. The play is presently Halle’s most awarded and internationally produced piece.

In his 2009 radio drama *Salme fra Østfronten* (Psalm from the Eastern Front), an old man is dying. The nurses, aware that he is suffering and struggling with something, find many scars on his body. It turns out that he fought with the Germans on the Eastern Front during World War II. On his deathbed, he relives his traumatic experiences when he was trapped, along with seven other young men, in a mud hole somewhere in the Baltic in 1944. Nominated for the Prix Italia, the play won the Nordic Radio Drama Award in 2010.

Starting in the autumn of 2013, as newly appointed professors, Jesper Halle and Tore Vagn Lid began developing Norway’s first education specifically for dramatists at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts.



Malmfrid Hovsveen Hallum – M.H. Hallum – (b. 1979). Hallum was educated at Rose Bruford College in London and at the University of Oslo. She made her debut in 2009 with the radio play *Værhanen* (The Weathervane), about a young politician who has captured the spirit of the time but has trouble hanging on to it. Since then, she has written 11 plays and had them produced in Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands. In addition to the Amsterdam Fringe Silver Award for *The Dahmer Syndrome*, she in 2014 received the Writers' Guild of Norway's award, Gledesglasset ("The Happiness Glass"), as well as Skien municipality's scholarship for artists. The same year she was nominated for the Ibsen Award for her play *Rekonstruksjoner* (Reconstructions). Several of her works have been translated into English.

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THE DAHMER SYNDROME. BLACK BOX THEATRE, OSLO 2014. PHOTO: MARIUS MENSINK

"After six months of existential anxiety, right before I was going to send in job applications to all the large supermarket chains, I received notice that I had been granted support for my projects, and a scholarship. I am eternally grateful! This writer works well under pressure. But there are limits. ... I am extremely happy to have been given the opportunity to do what I like best for at least another year."

This is what Malmfrid Hovsveen Hallum, or M.H. Hallum as she calls herself, said to the website of the Writers' Guild of Norway in 2011. Now, in 2015, she is still engaged in doing what she likes best and has, together with among others Fredrik Brattberg and Gyrid Axe Øvsteng, been called "the New Wine" in contemporary Norwegian drama. She has now finished a productive and award-winning 2014 in Henrik Ibsen's house in Skien, as the recipient of Skien municipality's scholarship for artists. The same year the production of *The Dahmer Syndrome*, for which she wrote the script, received the Amsterdam Fringe Silver Award.

The Dahmer Syndrome, directed by Øystein Johansen, takes its starting point in the story of the American serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, a fastidious murderer who chose his victims with great care. He killed them in a quiet, painless, perhaps one might even say loving way. In addition to cut-

ting up the corpses and packaging the body parts neatly in plastic, he drilled holes in the heads of his dead victims and injected them with hormones in order to make them seem alive. This way he came much closer to them than he would have been able to, had they really been alive. In *The Dahmer Syndrome*, the follow-up to *A Thing of Beauty*, M.H. Hallum tries to get under the skin of the murderer, in order to approximate some kind of logic of brutality. But the play is not really about the murders and the dissections – the focus is on what came before and after, what lay behind and below: dreams, childhood memories and everyday events. Thus, *The Dahmer Syndrome* became a study of the lonely individual's longing for community. It premiered in Norway at the Black Box Teater in Oslo in the autumn of 2014, where it ran to sold-out houses on the main stage.

In 2015, Hallum has continued her collaboration with Øystein Johansen and also joined forces with the Belgian company Theater Malpertuis Tielt in the production of *While Waiting*, which takes place on the inside of daily life in the trenches in Belgium during World War I. What memories are left? How do we relate to memories that are too overwhelming? What remains? In a place, in a book, in a body? ask Hallum and Johansen.



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SENSURERT. DET NORSKE TEATRET, OSLO. PHOTO: DAG JENSEN.

Kim Atle Hansen (b. 1981). Educated as both a playwright and an actor, Kim Atle Hansen has had his work performed in theatres across Norway and Europe. His play *Buy Nothing Day* for young people was listed by the European Theatre Convention as being among the “120 best contemporary European plays for the stage”. As a recipient of the 2012 Writers’ Guild of Norway grant, Hansen was awarded 250.000 kroner to complete his latest play, *Sensurert*, which premiered at Norway’s largest theatre, Det Norske Teatret, during the celebration of the bicentenary of the Norwegian Constitution in the autumn of 2014.

A quiet, thin man, Kim Atle Hansen hails from Sola, south of Stavanger – located on Norway’s barren and windy west coast – and has already established, despite his modesty, a well-respected theatrical career for himself.

A playwright, actor, director and musician, he frequently fills all the roles in his productions: “*I have a sense of the old-fashioned concept of the ‘theatre maker’.* In some sense, I can be called an auteur, but first and foremost I am a playwright and an actor. A combination of something very lonely, yet very social.”

Narrative- and text-based, Hansen’s work is unlike that of many of his Norwegian peers. Reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht, but without imposing a political agenda, Hansen juggles different points of view while insisting that each is equally valid – or invalid.

Such an approach is illustrated in his 2009 play *Buy Nothing Day*, in which two young anti-capitalists blow up a shopping mall, and also in *Reaching for Straws* (2011), where he vehemently argues for the elimination of government support for the arts.

From a Brechtian distance, Hansen plays with his themes in their execution. The narrative of *Revolver* from 2012, about a greengrocer who initiates a revolution in an unnamed dictatorship, contains several possi-

ble plot paths which are chosen by members of the audience. The members of the audience are also encouraged to say “Stop!” if they wish to hear in more detail what’s happening at any particular moment.

In his latest project, *Sensurert* (Censored), produced at Det Norske Teatret in the autumn of 2014, Hansen explores the struggle between ideologies: “*I use theatre as a model for the public: In a play, there are different characters who have conflicting views – and all are somehow incorrect.*” Tom, who is an artist, exhibits an autonomous installation where books that mean a lot to a great many people, such as the Bible, the Ikea catalogue and, not least, the Koran, are moving slowly on a conveyor belt towards a burning flame. They thus stand in danger of being destroyed by fire, unless the audience takes action to prevent it. Unfortunately, the Koran is placed first in the queue. No one interferes, and then all hell breaks loose ... “*Sensurert contains many fanatical attacks, not least against Islam. But unlike the artist in the play and the screaming people on the stage, it does not excite my passions. Kim Atle Hansen’s strategy is different – he wants us to think. And that is one of the strengths of the production,*” wrote Therese Bjørneboe in *Aftenposten*.



PHOTO: JOHN ERIK RILEY

Johan Harstad (b. 1979). Originally from Stavanger, Harstad made his debut in 2001 with his prose collection *Herfra blir du bare eldre* (From Here You Can Only Get Older). Since then, he has published a large number of short stories, novels, music essays and plays, many of which have been translated into, for instance, French, English, Finnish or Hindi. He has also won a long line of prizes, from Literary Talent of the Year in the newspaper *Dagbladet* in 2002 to the Norwegian Ibsen Award in 2014. In addition, Harstad is also operating a project/label/organization/blog called LACKTR (sometimes the name The Lacktr Prpgnda Community is also used). Through this outlet, he produces graphic art, sound, film, photos and texts on an independent basis. Among other things, LACKTR was responsible for releasing a CD called *Bring Out Your Life Vests* in 2005, which accompanied the first one thousand copies of the novel *Buzz Aldrin, hvor ble det av deg i alt mylderet?*.



OSV, NATIONALTHEATRET, OSLO 2013. PHOTO: GISLE BJØRNEBY

“Every dad thinks he is immortal. And every child realizes, sooner or later, that he isn’t.” (From the novel *Hässelby* by Johan Harstad.)

On the strength of its succinct, sorrowful, yet humorous human insight, the sentence above may at this point be allowed to appear as representative of its author, Johan Harstad. Much of what he has written has this quality.

Like many others, Harstad waited quite a few years before he tried his hand at writing drama. But already his first novel, *Buzz Aldrin, hvor ble det av deg i alt mylderet?* (*Buzz Aldrin, What Happened to You in All the Confusion?*), from 2005, became the subject of an extensive dramatization and has been shown both as a regular movie and as an award-winning TV series. This story of a man who is obsessed with the idea of being life’s eternal, anonymous Number Two, truly brought Harstad’s name forward in the collective Norwegian consciousness.

After writing a number of plays with an enormous formal range, from absurd mono-dramas and one-acters to long monologue-driven visual radio plays, Harstad was in 2009 hired as the National Theatre’s first in-house dramatist. During his first year, he wrote *OSV. (ETC.)*, a spectacular and dark story of war, genocide and a family on the verge of collapse.

This work was quickly published in book form and nominated for the Norwegian literature award *Brageprisen* (the Brage Prize) the following year. It was also performed as a reading, but did not get its first stage performance until the autumn of 2013.

The action of the play takes place in 1994, the year that the Lillehammer Winter Olympics put Norway on the map. But this was also the year that 800.000 Tutsis were massacred in Rwanda, when the local population were killed in large numbers by snipers in Sarajevo, and the Russians and the Chechens kept slaughtering each other in Grozny. *OSV.* pays a visit to all of these venues, but the centre of attention is the Zimmer family, whose members in different ways are impacted by such world events.

This was Johan Harstad’s breakthrough as a dramatist, for which he was given the Norwegian Ibsen Award for 2014. *“In OSV, Harstad shows how the theatre can be a discussion forum for great themes without robbing them of their complexity. As a suggestion for a contemporary historical drama, the cynicism of war is thematized, along with the media’s (including the theatre’s) powerlessness in their confrontation with it. OSV. is an uncompromising work, which it is impossible to remain indifferent to,”* the jury proclaimed.

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PHOTO: KRISTIN VON HIRSCH



MEET ME, DEN NATIONALE SCENE 2013. PHOTO: MAGNUS SKREDE.

Liv Heløe (b. 1963). Having worked as an actress in a number of key Norwegian theatres since 1988, Heløe made her debut as a playwright in 1992 with *Negressen* (The Negress). One of Norway's most performed playwrights, she has had productions at different theatres every year since 1999 and has received both an Ibsen and a Hedda Award.

Liv Heløe has a special talent for putting into words what occurs in the interface between the large and the small, between the personal and the social, between the everyday and the globalized.

"The performance lets the depth lie on the surface," wrote the reviewer Therese Bjørneboe about *I år skal det være moderne* (This Year, It's Supposed to Be Modern), produced at the National Theatre in 2011. A kind of avant-garde cabaret about the women who built Norway, or: How would the bra-burners of the seventies look at the current housewife blogging?

Starting out as an actress, for over 20 years Liv Heløe has had the parallel roles of both player and playwright. She is not adverse to collaboration, and for *I år skal det være moderne*, several of the actresses contributed with stories from their own mothers. Another one of her works, *Før det ringer* (Before It Rings), is a result of conversations with pupils about concepts such as integrity, decency and remorse. This production, which was staged at the small Brageteatret in the city of Drammen, toured schools across the whole region and was given a Hedda Award in 2010 for Best Production for Children and Young People.

That same year, Heløe was widely presented over the

course of an entire month at the Norwegian Broadcasting Company's prestigious Radioteatret. Among these pieces was *Lise L.* about the war reporter Lise Lindbæk (1905–1961), a woman who had a great impact on modern Norway.

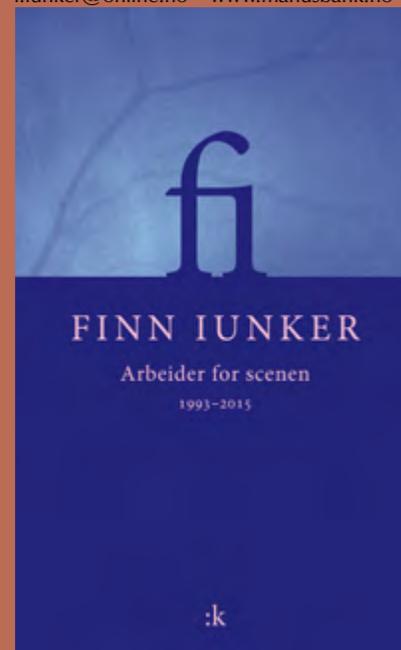
The year 2013 was a busy one for Liv Heløe, with three new plays premiering: her play for young people, *Møt meg* (Meet Me), at Den Nationale Scene, portraying the lives of unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors; the radio drama *Briskeby*, concerning the vulnerability of a life that consists of spending money, only to end up penniless; and *Broene* (The Bridges) at Brageteatret, Heløe's contribution to the centenary celebration of women's right to vote.

In her most recent play, *Susann*, created during her residence as in-house dramatist at the Norwegian Center for New Playwriting in 2014, Heløe includes herself, as playwright, in the play in order to understand the main character. *Susann* is on the verge of selling her own apartment before moving in with her boyfriend in his flat, and feels quite ambivalent about the whole thing. As part of her creative process, the dramatist is trying to understand *Susann*, choosing to become a part of the play herself. Liv Heløe's name is therefore included among the cast of characters.



PHOTO: ASI FÖCKER

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KOLON FORLAG

Finn Iunker (b. 1969). With a Master of Arts degree from the University of Bergen with the subjects Philosophy, Logic and Comparative Literature, Iunker had his debut as a dramatist in 1994 with *The Answering Machine*. He has since written eight plays, which have been performed in Germany, Austria, Denmark, England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal and Canada. In 2006, he won the Norwegian Ibsen Prize for *Orkhons død* (Orkhon's Death). After a period as Research Fellow in Comparative Literature at the University of Bergen, Finn Iunker successfully defended his Ph.D. dissertation about Bertolt Brecht's *Der Jasager* (The Yes Sayer) in the autumn of 2014. In May 2015, a collection of most of his plays was published by the Norwegian publishing house Kolon, entitled *Arbeider for scenen 1993–2015* (Works for the Stage, 1993–2015).

"Finn Iunker is perhaps the most intelligent Norwegian prose writer ever, also morally speaking. Perhaps not better than Ibsen, Hamsun or Solstad – maybe not much worse either – but more intelligent, which is astounding. What a kick to read him!" exclaimed the Norwegian literary critic Arve Kleiva in 2007.

Finn Iunker was a 25-year-old student in Germany when he wrote his 1994 debut, *The Answering Machine*. If it hadn't been for the subtitle, "A Text for Theatre," there would have been nothing to indicate that the text was solely intended for such a purpose. There is no coherent action, and although there is a first person, he or she could be more than one. The text wanders between historical and scientific references, travelogues and the difficulty of raising teenage girls. Written in a tight prose consisting of short sentences – often just a single word – one could say it is about the incompatibility of experience and memory.

Like many of Iunker's texts, it was first staged abroad, initially by the American director John Jesurun, who distributed the lines among six actors. It was then taken up by the Belgian group tg STAN as a monologue performed by Frank Verduyssen.

In the years that followed, Iunker's plays were per-

formed at several venues around Europe as well as by various independent Norwegian theatre groups. It wasn't until 2010, however, that his work was shown at a Norwegian institutional theatre, when *Ifigeneia* (Iphigenia) played at Trøndelag Teater.

In Norway, Finn Iunker is primarily related to the group Verk Produksjoner, who have presented four of his pieces. Known for their epic and vaudeville-like style laden with satirical and political undertones, Verk and Iunker are a good match, as both, in their own ways, operate within a Brechtian tradition.

Upon Verk's 2007 staging of *Ifigeneia*, IdaLou Larsen wrote: *"This is the best proof of what theatre people abroad have understood for a long time, but which Norwegian dramaturges and theatre directors apparently will not acknowledge: Finn Iunker's texts are made for the stage."* The text, based upon Euripides' ancient drama – where Agamemnon must sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis in exchange for winds favourable for sailing to Troy – is transformed in Iunker and Verk's hands into a vigorous political, anti-war farce. Honoured with a prize from Danse- og Teatersentrum (Performing Arts Hub Norway), *Ifigeneia* was also nominated for a Hedda Award.

VISNING (THE SHOWING) BY CECILIE LØVEID, THE NATIONAL THEATRE 2014. PHOTO: MARIT ANNA EVANGER.



NEVERLAND BY MARIA TRYTTI VENNERØD, DET NORSKE TEATRE 2010. PHOTO: MARIT ANNA EVANGER.

OSV. BY JOHAN HARSTAD. NATIONALTHEATRET, OSLO 2013. PHOTO: GISLE BJØRNEBY.



MEDEALAND BY SARA STRIDSBERG, DIRECTED BY LENE THERESE TEIGEN, DEN NATIONAL SCENE, 2014. PHOTO: ODD MEHJUS.

Are Kalvø (b. 1969). An author, a satirist, a stand-up comedian and a familiar radio voice, Kalvø made his debut as a dramatist at Det Norske Teatret in 1998 with *Tusen år og like blid* (A Thousand Years and Just as Cheerful), where he himself played a role. He did the same double duty in the case of *Det folk vil ha* (What People Want) in 2005, and has also written and acted in a string of stand-up shows. In 2010, he went on to write *Norge – Brasil, en fotballopera* (Norway – Brazil: A Football Opera), and in October of 2014, he made his debut as a solo performer in *Kalvø – ein time av livet ditt du aldri får tilbake*, which is still playing in the spring of 2015.

www.arekalvo.no, www.arekalvo.no/kontakt



PHOTO: GEIR HENNING HOPLAND

“There are few things that I’m certain about, but I’m reasonably sure that the main problem in the world is not that people have an excessive sense of humour.”

This is what Are Kalvø wrote in his regular column in the newspaper *Aftenposten* the same week that the attack on the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* took place, in January of 2015. The quote is typical of this popular comedian, who has been highly visible in the Norwegian public arena since he first appeared as a columnist in the Oslo newspaper *Dagsavisen* in 1992. For many years, he was one of the hosts of the weekly satirical program *Hallo i uken* on the Norwegian public radio channel NRK. In addition, he has been active as a stand-up comedian and scriptwriter for other comedians. He has published a string of books with titles such as *Kunsten å vere neger* (The Art of Being a Negro), *Bibelen 2* (The Bible 2) and *Våre venner kinesarane* (Our Friends, the Chinese). And not least: He has increasingly distinguished himself as a writer for the stage and has himself become a prominent stage personality.

In 2010, he resurrected in operatic form one of the greatest sports events in the Norwegian collective consciousness: Norway’s victory over Brazil in the football World Cup in 1998. The performance premiered on the

local opera scene in Nordfjord on the Norwegian west coast, in the county of Sogn and Fjordane, which has the distinction of having nurtured two of this game’s most central players: the brothers Jostein and Tore André Flo. As one might expect, the performance was divided into two halves, with some stoppage time for good measure, as it followed the match’s own dramaturgy. In 2012, the opera continued its successful run in the capital, at Det Norske Teatret. It even convinced IdaLou Larsen, otherwise totally uninterested in football, that *“it elevates the game of football to the level of an original, intelligent and charming social satire,”* as she wrote.

In the autumn of 2014, Are Kalvø was ready for his first solo performance, entitled *Kalvø – ein time av livet ditt du aldri får tilbake* (Kalvø – An Hour of Your Life You Never Get Back). *“Did you know that we spend about three and a half years of our lives on brushing our teeth and general grooming?”* he asks. Taking off from the Bureau of Statistics’ investigation of people’s use of their time from 2012, he asks if we are using our time on the right or the wrong things. According to the newspaper VG, *“compassion is Are Kalvø’s ‘secret’ as a comedian. Not even his ironic armour can cool down the warmth that is pulsating underneath”*.

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PHOTO: CHRIS ERICHSEN



INGENTING AV MEG, DET NORSKE TEATRET 2014. PHOTO: DAG JENSSEN.

Arne Lygre (b. 1968). Born in Bergen, Lygre made his debut as a playwright in 1998, and since then, he has written seven plays. These have been translated into 12 languages and have been performed around the world, in countries including Denmark, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Brazil and, especially, France. He is also a writer of novels and short stories.

“Now Lygre’s name is on everyone’s lips!” These were the words of Berit Gullberg, Arne Lygre’s Swedish publisher, when *Jeg forsvinner* (I Disappear) was performed at the National Theatre in Oslo in the autumn of 2012 – the play having already had its world premiere in October 2011, at the Théâtre National de la Colline, one of the five national theatres in France.

After Henrik Ibsen and Jon Fosse, Arne Lygre is considered to be one of the greatest Norwegian dramatists in Europe. He made his debut in 1998 with the play *Mamma og meg og menn* (Mother and Me and Men), and has since then written seven other plays which have been staged and published around the world.

Lygre’s dramas have been called enigmatic and accessible at the same time. As Brigitte Salimo wrote in *Le Monde*: *“He knows how to hit where it hurts.”*

Så stillhet (Then Silence) from 2009 introduces us to three people in a nameless place and situation. Over the course of ten concise scenes, Lygre asks what roles humans are forced to play in order to survive. The characters tell, or rather: develop, the stories as they go in and out of their various roles, commenting on the unfolding action as they do so, expression and content merging into a tight composition.

In *Jeg forsvinner*, which earned Lygre the Norwegian Ibsen Award, a group of people are trapped in a reality on the brink of disaster. *“Lygre’s fictional drama presents the disaster brilliantly, with more truth and strength than any kind of reality TV,”* wrote Tom Egil Hverven in *Klassekampen*.

“Prior to becoming a writer, Arne Lygre wished to be an actor. That could be the reason why his plays, especially his most recent ones, give the impression that the characters are inventing their own fictions as the play unfolds: as if the playwright had given them the task of creating their own world,” wrote Anne-Françoise Benhamou, professor in theatre studies.

His latest play, *Ingenting av meg* (Nothing of Me), takes place in the aftermath of a woman’s breakup from her husband and enters into the ensuing chaos and pain. It opened to rave reviews in April of 2014 at Stadsteatern in Stockholm. The following autumn, it was produced at Det Norske Teatret in Oslo. *“The action of the play is painful enough in itself, but it is Lygre’s language that is the primary carrier of the pain,”* wrote Chris Erichsen on scenekunst.no about this powerful production. And the play continues its successful run, as it is scheduled to open at Den Nationale Scene in Bergen in the spring of 2015.

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Cecilie Løveid (b. 1951) is a playwright, author and poet, who has studied Visual Arts and Theatre. Her debut as a playwright came in 1982, and since then, she has written approximately 30 texts for the stage and radio. Løveid has received numerous awards for her work, including a Prix Italia for *Måkespisere*. After many years in Denmark, she moved back to her childhood city of Bergen in 2013 and published a highly acclaimed poetry collection. In addition, she collaborated with the visual artist Inghild Karlsen on the performance project *Jeg fant det du forlot* (I Found What You Left). In 2014, she received the Norwegian Critics' Association's Award for her play *Visning*, which continued its successful run at the National Theatre in the autumn of the same year.



KOLON FORLAG

“In the theatre, two elements seem particularly captivating: the solitude while I write and the collaboration that arises when the play takes shape on the stage,” Cecilie Løveid has said. A similar duality characterises her themes, content and language to a great extent. *“Løveid’s balance between inner and outer reality, between reflection and action, between expression and impression, between mind and body, between active and static, also leads her out to the borderline – the theatre’s borderline,”* wrote the jury in its presentation for the Norwegian Ibsen Award to Løveid in 1999. She is simultaneously described as avantgardistic and experimental on the one hand, and as classically oriented on the other.

She made her debut as a novelist in 1972 with *Most*, and got her breakthrough as a playwright 10 years later with the radio drama *Måkespisere* (Seagull Eaters), a raw and candid tale of lust and power, eroticism and pain. This award-winning radio play has been produced in several countries and won the Prix Italia in 1983.

In the 1980s, Løveid explored a more multimedia-based approach to her theatrical expression, where auditory and visual effects are as important as the text itself. *Vinteren revner* (The Winter Cracks), *Fornuftige dyr* (Rational Animals) and *Dobbel nytelse* (Double Pleas-

ure) deal with love, attraction and repulsion, incestuous tendencies within close family relationships, triangular dramas, etc.

Barock Friise, *Maria Q*, *Rhindøtrene* (The Rhinemaids) and *Østerrike* (Austria) are all based on historical figures. The plays present rich and fanciful versions of their subjects’ life stories while they, typical of Løveid, are full of tensions and desires. Several of these plays are an extension of medieval and baroque literature and can be viewed in the light of the passion play or the tragedy.

In January 2014, she had a new breakthrough with the play *Visning* (The Showing), which, having remained untouched since it was written in 2005, received its world premiere at the National Theatre in Oslo to rave reviews and sold-out performances. *“Visning by Cecilie Løveid is a roar of grief and pain, kept in check by a text that never says too much,”* wrote Liv Riiser in the newspaper *Vårt Land*.

“A master of the word, Cecilie is gifted with a unique imagination and playfulness. She can, better than anyone else I know, write about women’s emotions and complexity, strength, rage and naked vulnerability, and she has a burlesque humour,” says theatre director Ellen Horn.



Andreas Markusson (b. 1951). Markusson has been a full-time dramatist since 1982 and has acquired a wide-ranging experience from theatre, film and television. In addition, he has published several books, among them *Dødssynder og andre bagateller* (Mortal Sins and Other Trifles), about the village on Corsica where he lived for eight years. His comedies *Kan det være noe hun har spist?* (Could It Be Something That She Ate?) and *Versailles* are available in English and French, respectively.

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FREDRIKSSONS FABRIKK, PHOTO: NRK.

“While the dramatist could earlier juggle three balls in the air with a reasonably good chance of catching all three, nowadays you have to have twelve balls going, and expect to lose at least ten of them.”

This was said by Andreas Markusson in connection with the Writers’ Guild of Norway’s “Dramatists’ Relay” in 2011. From his place of residence in Nice, France, Markusson keeps sending a steady stream of balls home to the Norwegian TV, film and theatre public. Most of them appear to hit their target, too.

Originally a theologian, he in 1983 cast off from his native town of Larvik in his own sailboat, with no definite idea of where he was going to end up. His first landfall was on Corsica, where he settled down and after a while started a family, before moving on to Nice later on.

His specialty is comedies, of which several have been staged at Den Nationale Scene in Bergen, at Oslo Nye Teater and the National Theatre. He has been responsible for many of the most popular TV series in Norway and Sweden. It all started in 1987 with *Pilen flyttebyrå* (The Arrow Moving Company), a sitcom about the Swedish guest worker Lennart, who is looking for a job and ends up in the Pilen flyttebyrå. He and his ado-

lescent sidekick Magnus are constantly encountering snags while on their moving assignments.

Fredrikssons fabrikk (Fredriksson’s Factory), translated and adapted from its English original by Markusson, made a hugely successful run on both Norwegian and Swedish television through large parts of the nineties. The series is all about the small Norwegian clothes factory called Fredriksson’s Fashion, which is run by an ambitious Swedish manager. His four Norwegian seamstresses seem to be more preoccupied with chatting, daydreaming and busying themselves with their own things than with getting the work done.

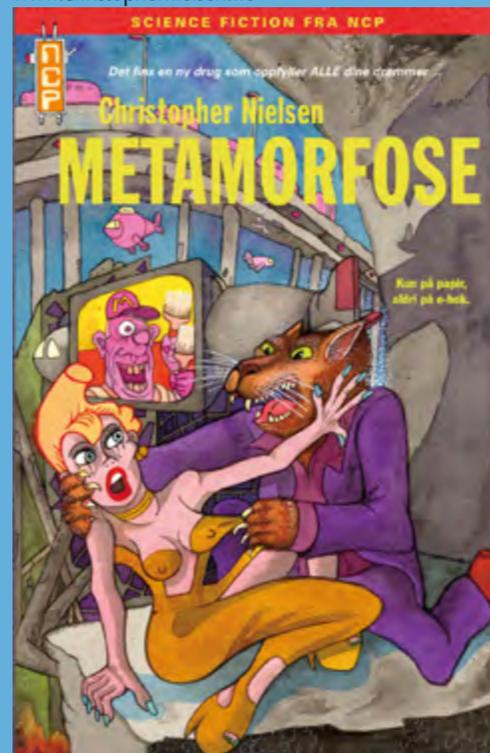
The year 2013 saw the production, at Oslo Nye Teater, of *Trassalderen* (The Obstinate Age), a feel-good comedy about a revolt among the elderly inmates of a nursing home. A “hip” oldster convinces the entire crew that they should abscond to Naples, not to die but to live. *“Lightweight entertainment, but with considerable sting,”* wrote Mona Levin in *Aftenposten*.

Andreas Markusson is also the man behind the script for the large Norwegian film project *Sonja*, about the legendary figure-skating queen and Hollywood star Sonja Henie, slated to begin shooting early in 2016.



Christopher Nielsen (b. 1963). The Oslo-born Nielsen is a pioneer of modern Norwegian underground comics and had his first strip published in 1980. His debut as a dramatist came in 2008 with the musical *Verdiløse menn*, for which he was awarded the Norwegian Ibsen Award. Prior to writing for the theatre, he wrote and directed animated films, including the feature *Slipp Jimmy fri* (Free Jimmy), which won the Amanda Award for Best Film at the 2006 Norwegian Film Festival. In March 2014, Nielsen made his debut as a novelist with the science fiction novel *Metamorfose* (Metamorphosis), which *Dagbladet's* reviewer characterized as “a crooked masterpiece”. In October 2014, a comprehensive exhibition of Nielsen’s work opened at the reputable Henie Onstad Art Centre. On more than 1500 square metres, the public were shown a wide selection of cartoons, pictorial art, film and drama from the period 1980–2014.

www.christophernielsen.no



NO COMPRENDO PRESS

Primarily known as a comic-book artist, Christopher Nielsen also has a relatively recent career as a playwright. He is famous for his cartoons depicting a trashy subcultural universe populated by humorous outcasts: addicts, nerds, decrepit musicians and perverts, etc., but in the past few years he has transplanted his sordid satirical humour from the comic book to the stage with immediate and great success.

Nielsen’s first hit was the 2008 musical *Verdiløse menn* (Worthless Men), based on the songs of his late brother, the legendary rock musician Joachim Nielsen. The songs are woven into the stories of women and drugs, begging and beer, dead friends and everlasting friendship. Initially staged in a small theatre, the musical quickly achieved an enormous popularity, which forced its relocation to the main stage of the National Theatre. For this debut work as a playwright, Nielsen was awarded the Norwegian Ibsen Award.

“The genius of the brothers Christopher and Joachim Nielsen is that they are not primarily making political satire but give a voice to people who aren’t normally heard,” wrote *Morgenbladet*.

Starting with *Hustyrannen* (The House Tyrant), Nielsen then embarked on a trilogy in which he deter-

mined “to focus on all that is rotten in the kingdom of Norway”.

The second instalment, entitled *Entropi* (Entropy) features a kleptomaniac multi-drug-abusing addict with violent tendencies, a gay narco-Catholic, and a junkie who dreams of becoming a world champion of overdose – all of whom are seeking help from a gestalt therapist with a dark secret. It was aptly described by Therese Bjørneboe in *Aftenposten* as “a doom party”.

The trilogy’s finale, *Holocaustmusikalen* (The Holocaust Musical), presents six actors as they audition for parts in the aforementioned musical. In reality-TV style, they are placed in each other’s company and put through a series of merciless tests which provoke challenging ethical issues.

In January 2014, *Verdiløse menn* was once more staged at the National Theatre in Oslo and immediately sold out.





PHOTO: KRISTIN VON HIRSCH

Kate Pendry (b. 1965). Although born and raised in London, Pendry has been living in Oslo since 1995. She has her formal acting training from Mountview Theatre School in London, and – including juvenilia – has worked in theatre for 35 years. Since arriving in Norway, she has used her classical theatre background in a wide range of artistic expressions, including VR installations, performance art, curating art, live sound manipulations, radio, and of course pure theatre. She has received several awards, including the Norwegian Ibsen Award for *Erasmus Tyrannus Rex* in 2010. One of her most recent works, *Points of Pain*, had its world premiere in Beirut before being performed in Cairo in May of 2014, at the Freedom of Speech Festival RedZone – Free the Arts. *Points of Pain* is a poetic examination of the terrorist attacks of July 22, 2011, in Norway and their aftermath. A surrealist radio series entitled *Oppdrag: Renhold* (Mission: Cleaning) by Kate Pendry was aired on Norwegian radio in the spring of 2015. In February the same year, she gave a stand-up performance called *Mohammed and Me*, in complete darkness, at a festival in Oslo's Medieval Park.

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FROM PEEPSHOW MARILYN: GENTLEMEN PREFER DEAD BLONDES.
PHOTO: HELENE FJELL

Where does one begin? Kate Pendry came to Norway from London in 1995, and since then, she has continually put her distinctive mark on the Norwegian performing arts. She has been a very visible and, for many, annoying presence in the minefield between art and politics, and in that context some see her as a performance artist, a label she fiercely rejects: *"I have three years at Mountview Theatre School in London. I was brought up on Shakespeare and Ibsen. I get offended when people call me a performance artist. Anyone can be that. I take my profession seriously, I'm with the union. And I get angry when I see actors who do not take their profession seriously."*

When you see Kate Pendry on stage, there can be no doubt about this: She knows her subject and her craft. The combination of body language and facial expressions is reminiscent of much of the history of acting, from the classics to Chaplin to ... recent performance art!

Her roles as an actor and a playwright are organically intertwined. Highly prolific, she has a unique approach to writing, her final texts often being the result of improvised performances. Such is the case with her recurring character of 'Johnny Johnson', whom she portrays

as an everyday prophet from the pubs of East London, a man with a big heart and a larger ego, exhibiting "the average man's relationship to porn and football".

Johnson is just one of a number of archetypes that Kate Pendry has brought to life on stage. In *Dead Diana*, Princess Diana rises from the dead and becomes a critic of the media community. In *Peepshow Marilyn: Gentlemen Prefer Dead Blondes*, Pendry executes modifications to her own body, staged as Marilyn Monroe in the moment of death: 16 hooks penetrating through her skin as a dramatization of Marilyn's pain as well as her own.

A list of her "top hits" also includes pieces like *Sex in the Warzone* (2002) about war tourism, *Pornography* (2008) about ... pornography, and *Erasmus Tyrannus Rex* (2009) about a fictional Norwegian school massacre.

It is a publicly established "fact" that Kate Pendry is a provocateur, but she is first and foremost an artist of strong integrity, determined to pursue her own expression to the bitter end.

POINTS OF PAIN BY KATE PENDRY. PUPPET BY GRETE LARSSEN. PHOTO: LILL-ANN CHEPSTOW LUSTY.



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costumes : Thibault Vanhove

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du 1^{er} octobre au 21 novembre 2014

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MORGON OG KVELD (MORNING AND EVENING). A NOVEL BY JON FOSSE. STAGED AT NATIONALTEATRET 2015. PHOTO: DAG JENSSEN.



MEET ME BY LIV HELØE. DEN NATIONALE SCENE I BERGEN, 2013. PHOTO: MAGNUS SKREDE.

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PHOTO: KRISTIN VON HIRSCH



FROM THE TELEVISION SERIES, THE FIGHT FOR HEAVY WATER.

Petter S. Rosenlund (b. 1967). Stavanger-born Rosenlund has written 14 plays for theatre, television and feature film. His works have been translated into 9 languages and have been produced on more than 20 stages in Europe. He is the winner of the National Ibsen Award and the Amanda Award for Best Children's and Youth Film, as well as the Children's Literature Prize awarded by the bookstore chain Ark.

"A new voice in the small chamber choir of contemporary Norwegian playwrights should always be applauded." These were the words used by the director Ola B. Johannessen at Trøndelag Teater to welcome the new young playwright Petter S. Rosenlund in 1997.

Since then, Rosenlund's first play, *En umulig gutt* (An Impossible Boy), has been produced at more than 20 venues in Europe and been translated into 9 languages, in addition to earning the dramatist the Norwegian Ibsen Award. The play is a black comedy about a family that destroys itself. It takes place in a hospital environment, where all the adults think the impossible boy, little Jim, is sick, whereas in reality it's the adult world itself that is sick.

"Take a Norwegian playwright debutant and a cunning dose of crazy humor. Add some stinging satire about self-absorbed adults, stir in stuffing and a season of *Chicago Hope* boiled down to one hour of hysterical soap opera, and you begin to approach a description of Petter S. Rosenlund's debut piece, 'An Impossible Boy'," wrote Hans Rossiné in *Dagbladet*.

Since then, Rosenlund has written quite a few award-winning scripts for the theatre as well as television and film. *Thomas P.*, a TV series in 11 parts, is about a

boy who discovers that he has the ability to hear what others think. The novelistic edition of the series was awarded a Children's Literature Prize in 2007, voted for by 10.000 children all over Norway.

At the other end of the scale, Rosenlund has written a contemporary version of Sophocles' drama *Elektra*, which introduces a Norwegian-Pakistani Elektra with roots in two different cultures. The dramatic story's prelude is the death of Elektra's father, for which the young woman suspects her mother's new husband. The characters become entangled in an intricate game, and the desire for revenge develops into a death spiral which will not cease until Elektra is left alone. "An impressive, powerful performance," wrote *Klassekampen*.

In 2014, Rosenlund completed the script of *Kampen om tungvannet* (The Fight for Heavy Water), a television series that proved a real trial of strength. The plot is based on one of the most exciting stories from the World War II, namely the Nazis' efforts to develop a nuclear bomb and the Allies' desperate struggle to prevent this from happening. The streets were empty all over Norway when the six episodes in this unbearably thrilling and debate-making series were televised during the winter of 2015.

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SUR GRUS, DET NORSKE TEATRET. PHOTO: MARIT ANNA EVANGER.

Erlend Sandem (b. 1977). Originally from Oslo, Sandem was educated at the Writing Academy of Hordaland County. His debut came in 2006 with *Ned til sol*, which earned him the Hedda Award as “Debutant of the Year”. Since then, he has written six more plays that have been performed at major Norwegian theatres.

It was evident already from Erlend Sandem’s first play, *Ned til sol* (Down the Sun), that his emphasis is on dialogue. “Erlend Sandem shows an impressive ability to write dialogue, something which characterizes all his plays,” wrote the respected theatre critic IdaLou Larsen in 2008. “He fully understands the art of defining his characters through vocabulary and sentence construction.”

Son of actor, playwright and director Vidar Sandem, Erlend Sandem has the theatre in his blood. Since 2004, he has devoted himself to being a dramatist, getting off to a flying start with the aforementioned family drama *Ned til sol*, for which he received the Hedda Award as “Debutant of the Year”.

Usually characterized as raw and brutal, Sandem’s language is put to particular effect in *Strekkode* (Barcode), dealing with a group of friends brought up in an affluent neighbourhood on the west side of Oslo. Existing in a state of perpetual puberty devoid of morals, the lives of these spoilt young men revolve around sex, drugs and the pursuit of love.

Raising questions about values and responsibility, or lack thereof, Sandem reveals everyone’s desperate desire to be liked. In his play for young people, *Blowing Bub-*

bles, he depicts six party-going youngsters on the night of May 1, suffering under the unrelenting pressure to grow up in a hurry, a pressure that will hardly be relieved by blowing bubbles. According to Petra Helgesen, writing in *Bergens Tidende* in 2009, “the play stands out ... with a particularly tight dramaturgy. Dialogue and actions that initially appear to be random, all turn out to be painfully crucial to the story.”

In *Sur grus* (Sour Gravel), it is merciless Time itself that plays the leading role: Time, which will suddenly cease for us all, but which keeps that precise moment secret. “From one moment to the next, everything changes, lovers become strangers, lives and relationships mere constructions that can be extinguished in a second,” wrote Andreas Wiese in *Dagbladet* in 2009.

Sandem’s most recent work, *L.E.E.H.* (L.I.A.B.), is all about survival, whatever fate may have in store for you. Three different characters tell what is ostensibly three different stories, but it becomes increasingly clear that these three fates are intimately interwoven. The ultimate question is: Are you a good person if you perform good acts for very wrong reasons? The play conforms to the dramaturgy of a classical play, but is orchestrated as a vocal rock concert. “Life is a bitch, therefore no regrets.”



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SQUARE, PLAYED AT NTNU 2011. PHOTO: ULF BREISTRAND

Lene Therese Teigen (b. 1962). Teigen received her Master of Arts degree from the University of Bergen with a curriculum consisting of minors in Comparative Literature and Television Production and a major in Drama, with a concentration on dramaturgy. She has worked as a freelance dramatist/author, director, dramaturge, pedagogue and producer since the autumn of 1994 and has written more than 20 dramatic works for the stage, television, radio and film. She has also written two novels, published in 1993 and 2005, respectively. On the 24th of April, 2015, her play *Square* premiered in Montevideo, Uruguay, and in June, the Norwegian production of *Voiced*, written and directed by Teigen, will make a guest appearance in Cape Town, South Africa.

"I want to begin by establishing a fact of theatre history: Most of the dramatists who have made a lasting name for themselves in theatre history, have come from the theatre. They start out as practitioners, and write dramas as a function of their own practice. That actually applies to you as well," declared dramaturge Halldis Hoaas during a conversation with Lene Therese Teigen in connection with their joint efforts on *Arkeologene* (The Archaeologists), a play commissioned by Teater Ibsen in 2007. Teigen has been and still is in close contact with most of the functions of the dramatic arts, as an actress, playwright, dramaturge, producer, director, pedagogue, theorist and organiser.

With *Arkeologene*, Teigen again defied the theatre's hierarchical establishment. The only thing she brought along to her first meeting with the actors was a story of a man she knew, who with great enthusiasm had told her that he had been allowed to join his archaeologist friend on the job. Together with the cast she developed an exciting scenic and professional thriller that unearthed layer after layer of the characters' attitude to history and reality.

Teigen has been active as a dramatist and director since the end of the eighties. She has developed a personal expression full of scenic and character-based

changes and a spirited use of live images and sound. Her breakthrough came in 2001 with *Mater Nexus*. Here, we meet nine women positioned in different places in life, in decisive existential situations, and we follow them where the trajectories of their lives come together. Here, too, the script evolved out of a number of workshops together with the cast. Teigen herself directed the first production of the play at Oslo's Open Theatre. The play has been bought and performed at a number of theatres in Sweden and Finland, and is on the syllabus of drama courses at several universities. As late as in 2008, it was performed at a theatre in Tokyo.

In 2012, she wrote and directed *Under vår himmel* (Underneath Our Sky), based on interviews with 115 young people from the counties of Hedmark and Oppland, where Teigen herself has her roots. The play is all about roots and expectations in a landscape where many people struggle with dilemmas related to whether they should go out into the world or remain where they are. The play became a great success and went on a two-month tour in the two counties. *"The production is full of important questions about what makes life worth living out there in the countryside,"* wrote the newspaper *Nationen*.



SVEIN TINDBERG IN *BRAND*, BY HENRIK IBSEN, DET NORSKE TEATRET 2014. PHOTO: ERIK BERG.

Svein Tindberg (b. 1953). As the son of scenographer and head of technicians Snorre Tindberg at Det Norske Teatret, Svein Tindberg practically grew up in the theatre that was going to become his permanent location during large parts of his life. He made his debut there as an actor as early as in 1966, in the role of Prince Chulalongkorn in Hammerstein's *The King and I*. During the period 1974–76, he was educated as an actor at The Academy of Theatre in Oslo, where Kjetil Bang-Hanssen, his future close collaborator, was head. He has later distinguished himself as an interpreter both of the great classical writers and of contemporary Scandinavian dramatists. He has also played roles in musicals, in TV series, films and radio theatre. However, what has really brought him forward in the collective Norwegian consciousness is his adaptation and presentation of religious texts together with Kjetil Bang-Hanssen.

"The media seem to believe that people are unable to concentrate for more than three minutes at a time. But I believe that people are longing for silence and long thoughts," said the actor Svein Tindberg after receiving the Hedda Award for his self-composed one-man performance *Abrahams barn* (The Children of Abraham) in 2012.

At the time, this was the culmination of a large personal project which Tindberg has worked on since the early nineties, namely the adaptation and presentation of religious texts, in collaboration with director Kjetil Bang-Hanssen. It was a member of the audience who made him pursue this track in earnest, however: "She came up to greet me after a performance and suggested that I take a look at the Gospel according to St. Mark," recalls Tindberg.

This became the start of one of the most distinctive productions in recent Norwegian theatre history. Tindberg and Bang-Hanssen went straight to the heart of the matter, the original text, without any frame story or epic detours. Not one word was cut, not one word added, it was the real thing, the Gospel according to St. Mark the way one can read it in the Bible.

It started with a request to play three matinees. It

ended with a ticket queue around the block and more than 230 performances for approximately 76.000 spectators all over the country. After that, several other Bible texts followed, performed in theatres and church buildings, something which clearly hit home with large groups of people.

With *Abrahams barn*, Tindberg used himself as a starting point: *"For me it has been a fumbling way into my own ignorance. I wanted to find out what were the similarities and differences between the great foundational religious narratives. And a great many others have wondered about the same thing,"* he said to *Aftenposten*. The performance is a personal journey through the three global religions that all have Abraham as their founding father: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. This project also started with small pretensions and ended up with enthusiastic reviews, a Hedda Award and 242 performances for close to 90.000 spectators.

Abrahams barn turned into a bridge-building and public education project during a tension-filled period. And not least: It provided the answer that many people had been looking for in the wake of the terrorist attack on the government building and the social-democratic youth movement on July 22 the same year.



PHOTO: FREDRIK ARFF

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NEVERLAND. DET NORSKE TEATRET, 2010. PHOTO: MARIT ANNA EVANGER.

Maria Tryti Vennerød (b. 1978). Educated in Drama and Theatre Communications, Vennerød had her debut in 2002 with *Meir* (More) at the Norwegian Drama Festival, and she has since won several awards for her plays. In 2005, she received the Norwegian Ibsen Award for her play *Dama i luka* (The Woman in the Hatch).

One of Norway's promising young dramatists, Maria Tryti Vennerød grew up in Sogndal and Førde in the Norwegian fjordland, in the county of Sogn og Fjordane. Urban Norwegians often refer to such remote places as "Gokk", a word she borrowed for the title of one of her pieces:

"'Gokk' is a nice word. It felt good in this context. The play concerns what is inside and what is outside – and Gokk is typical of what is outside. It's about belonging on several levels: in a community that is trying to feel inside but has a sneaking feeling that many see it as being outside," Vennerød told the weekly paper *Morgenbladet* when the play opened in 2009.

Vennerød's dialogue is full of energy. Funny and rude, she is merciless in her treatment of the characters. In *Neverland* from 2010, a child dreams himself away to the synthetic universe of Michael Jackson's surreal and sumptuous *Neverland*, where the line between dream and reality is unclear.

In her blog *Ikkje direkte råka* (Not Directly Affected), she covered the daily progression of the lengthy trial of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, who slaughtered 77 people, mostly adolescents, on July 22, 2011. Her texts were produced as staged readings every Thursday from April to June 2012, at the book-

store of her publishing house.

"I was not directly affected," she says, *"but I nonetheless related to all that had happened. My goal was to personally interpret the daily events of the trial: the conflicts, the questions, the chaos and the confusion."*

In the project *Fem årstider* (Five Seasons), she once more utilised the format of an everyday blog, complemented by a number of spontaneous performances at various outdoor locations. The project received its theatrical summary at Det Norske Teatret in the autumn of 2013. *"Maria Tryti Vennerød is working on a project that fits her style well, one that we need in times when it has become all too easy to soothe our conscience through pressing a button on our mobile phones,"* wrote Chris Erichsen on the website *scenekunst.no*.

In the spring of 2016, the ambitious theatre project *Natt i verda – om andre verdenskrigen* (Night in the World – about World War II) will open at Det Norske Teatret in Oslo. Here, Vennerød is one of the contributors, together with Oleg Begajev, David Greig and Lukas Bärfuss. Her contribution, *Rein natur* (Unspoiled Nature), is the story of a Nazi doctor before, during and after the horrific crimes and experiments in the concentration camps during World War II.

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BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE YEARLY DRAMARATHON
AT DRAMATIKKENS HUS, OSLO. PHOTO: KRISTIN VON HIRSCH

TRANSLATION GRANTS

The Writers' Guild of Norway may award grants for the translation of Norwegian dramatic works to other languages. In order to apply for a grant, you must provide confirmation of interest from a producer/arranger or agent outside Norway, and the services of a professional translator.

In addition to supporting translations with a view to full production, grants may also be awarded for the translation of works for promotional purposes or public readings and for the translation of synopses for presentation. Applications may be made by the translator, writer or producer. The translation grant scheme is financed by NORLA – Norwegian Literature Abroad.

The primary purpose of the grant scheme is to contribute to the presentation/production of Norwegian drama abroad.

The Writers' Guild of Norway wishes to bring greater public attention to the translation grant scheme and to encourage writers to make use of it. The Guild's purpose is not to act as an agent for writers but, through encouraging active use of the grant scheme,

to help show that Norwegian drama boasts a diversity of voices that deserves to be heard beyond Norwegian shores!

All applications are assessed by the translation committee, which is elected for a two-year period by Writers' Guild members. The committee holds four grant award meetings each year.

Application deadlines: 15th February, 15th May, 15th September and 15th November.

For further information visit www.dramatiker.no

Applications for translation grants for drama to be published in book-form should be sent directly to NORLA.

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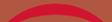


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