

Creating *A Doll's House*,
Part 2: exploring the
intersections of feminist
works with the theatrical
hair, makeup, and
costume design process

1. Pre-Production

Creating

Script Analysis: Part 1

- To begin this process, I first had to read and analyze *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen (1879).
 - *A Doll's House* is set in a Norwegian town in 1879 and traces the transformation of Nora Helmer from a life of traditional wifely, domiciliary work to a newly liberated person on a journey of reexamining her womanhood.
- This play was revolutionary as it questions the traditional roles of men and women in 19th-century marriage
 - The covenant of marriage was considered holy, and Ibsen's portrayal of it as well as his portrayal of gender roles, especially in regard to women, caused multifaceted controversy.
- Taking a close look at this script was imperative as this process was a unique situation in which the play I was working on had further written works depicting the same characters at an earlier time in their life, thus giving me more insight into their personhood.
 - The most important driving factor of the characters' personalities is that Ibsen was inspired by the belief that "a woman cannot be herself in modern society," since it is "an exclusively male society, with laws made by men and with prosecutors and judges who assess feminine conduct from a masculine standpoint."

Script Analysis: Part 2

- The next step in my design process was reading the script for *A Doll's House, Part 2* by Lucas Hnath (2017).
 - The play, set in 1894, tells the story of Nora returning to her family whom she had left 15 years prior. In the interim between the two plays, Hnath created the narrative that Nora became a successful womens' novelist but must return to the home and family she left to finalize her divorce as women did not have the legal right to sign the divorce papers alone.

- I quickly realized that the feminist undertones of this play, and the one on which it is based, are complex as both plays convolute how the audience perceives the characters' morals by portraying all of them as flawed yet honest.
- Reading this script was an entirely unique experience as I found intensely complex characters who were neither "good" nor "bad" tackling topics of familial and gender expectations, women's rights, and how people express their needs.

The first read of a script gives me the bare bones of the show: the author's intentions and lived point of view, themes, time/place/situation, and the characters' written personalities. It is then my job as a designer to do extensive research and contextualization to understand the characters as people that truly exist, or existed, so as to dress and style them appropriately while still conveying an original, unique design that has an apparent perspective. Some of the factors I look into for such context are the sociopolitical dilemmas of their day, inequities that any group of people in the show would have experienced in their specific hypothetical lived situation, their occupation, the clothing/hair/makeup trends of the day and what items individuals of every economic standing would have had access to, what specific colors indicated in their time and how it compares to what they indicate to modern audiences, and how certain design choices reflect the feminist ideologies of the play while being true to the given time period despite having modern contexts imposed upon them.

Character Analysis

◉ Nora

- Having always had her life dictated by patriarchal forces, her father followed by her husband, Nora finally reached her breaking point and became a woman finding success on her own in a society that did not encourage that.
 - Undisputable strength
 - Newly acquired money of her own
 - Complicated morals and relationship with womanhood
 - Resilience and resourcefulness

◉ Torvald

- A man who felt he had the rug pulled out from under him trying to navigate life as a single father, without ever hearing from Nora, something he still feels he deserves after 15 years.
 - A banker in the late 1800s
 - A worn-out, deeply hurt man who holds resentment that is mixed with hope in him at all times .

◉ Anne Marie

- A hard-working woman who has dedicated her life to a woman and her family, not necessarily by choice but for financial stability, though she has learned to love them as her own.
 - A mother figure for nearly every other character
 - Resents Nora for leaving her family on her own and not by necessity as she had to
 - Compassionate despite holding traditional, opposing views to Nora

◉ Emmy

- A young woman who never knew her mother, entering a marriage with no model of what one could look like, who finds comfort in the same patriarchal forces her mother found oppressive,
 - Headstrong
 - Takes a completely individual approach to the overwhelming majority's opinion of womanhood

Creating an Overall Concept

- One of the most important steps in my design process is creating a concept that displays the specific point of view I am approaching the design with. Without an apparent point of view that can be seen as a throughline between every character, the designs could easily fall flat and have no impact.
 - My concept became the idea that traditional displays of gender roles seen in clothing, hair, and makeup throughout history can be both liberating and oppressive.
 - The women share common experiences of being oppressed by a patriarchal society but internalize them in three very different ways so I wanted them to be in full skirts, underskirts, and corsets which are universal displays of femininity with elements to their design that express their individual relationships with womanhood.
 - Nora- blazer, skirt, firm fabrics, intricate updo
 - Anne Marie- clothing that can be worked in, shows strength, and is practical yet flattering and dainty
 - Emmy- lace, traditional lines, sweeping curls
 - The one man in the show is also trapped by ideas of masculinity and has been forced to keep up appearances despite experiencing intense hurt.
 - Torvald- Perfectly tailored three-piece suit, tie, and pocket watch but his age and exhaustion shine through

Creating Individualized Concepts

● Nora

- I was drawn to the idea of Nora being in a traditionally masculine blazer paired with a skirt, tying together historically gendered clothing associated with the patriarchal forces she had been oppressed by her entire life and her newfound understanding and reclamation of powerful womanhood.
- I wanted her to be in a red statement piece as the color has historically been viewed as representative of action, energy, passion, emotion, confidence, and power. However it also has connotations of danger and her wearing it displays a turning of the very real danger she faced going into the world as a newly single woman into something she wears proudly.

● Torvald

- He is gentle and caring which creates a dichotomy inside of him because he is also angry and exhausted.
- I viewed Torvald as a man who grasps on to any fragments of masculinity he can because his perfect life was shattered by a woman who stood up to him, something men during this time would have never expected. I knew his suit needed to be that of a successful banker, as that is his occupation, and finding ways to show the pain he experienced from the patriarchal forces that told him he needed to stay strong despite being deeply wounded would mostly be in his hair and makeup. Graying temples show how much he has aged, whether it be from the passage of time or the stress of being a single father.

Creating Individualized Concepts

- Anne Marie

- I knew Anne Marie needed to be in a self-imposed uniform of sorts as she takes her job very seriously and is proud of the work she has done for the family, especially after Nora left and she became the matriarch of sorts.
- She is proud financially as well, not wanting to sell out and take money from Nora to create a better life for herself, she sees the importance of her staying around for the family, especially once Nora leaves again.
- I wanted her selflessness, pride, and belief in her duties as the woman of the household to be shown through a intricate bodice, highlighting her bosom, something historically associated with nourishment.

- Emmy

- Emmy has a complicated relationship with femininity. She is strong-willed and independent yet beyond ready to live a life in which a man is taking care of her. I wanted her in softer muted tones that both matched and contrasted the palette of her mother so I decided pink lace would perfectly showcase her intricate and delicate relationship with what being a wife means to her while highlighting the familial relations they share whether they want to or not.
- She is a young woman who has grown up without her mother and finds comfort in the life that her mother hated so deeply so her silhouette needed to be much softer and more fluid than Nora's.

Production Meetings and Decision Making

- When the time came to meet with the director, Brian Sgambati, and rest of the production team to discuss his concept and ideas for the show as well as the other designers' concepts I was ready to ask the necessary questions that would link my research and newly formed concept to a design that would work for the story we, as a team, wanted to tell.
 - I showed the team my research, discussed the specific silhouettes I was considering for each character, and how to go about the portrayal of age via hair and makeup/if we would be using wigs
- The production team as a whole decided to go for a traditional approach with a modern flare in order to tell a universal story.
 - I internalized this and had to make the decision of how I would pull off combining the styles of 1879 and 2020 in a way that made sense and held true to my concept.
 - I decided the easiest way to do this was by altering certain silhouettes (hair, dress, and suit lines specifically) ever so slightly so they alluded to modern day trends while still holding true to the period.
- At this stage I checked in with the production manager to see what budget I had to complete my designs as that is a major decision maker during the next steps of my process.

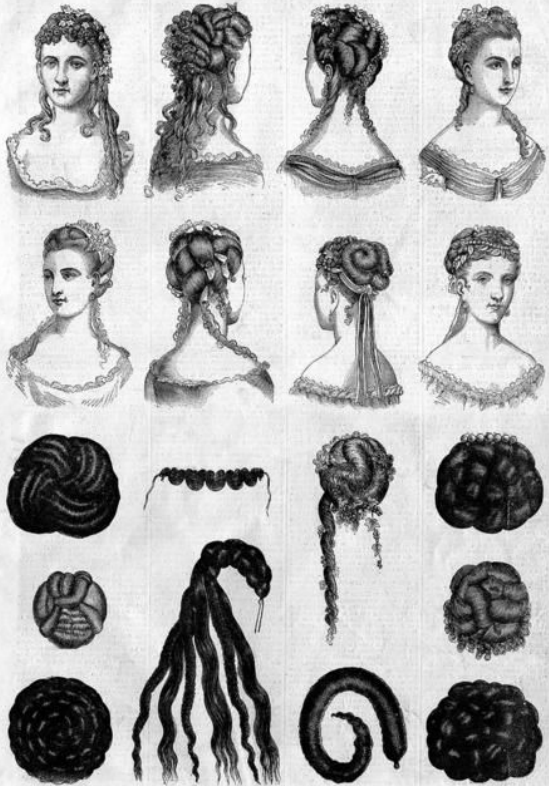
Research

● Hair and makeup

- I first researched the hairstyles of the period so I could find parallels to hairstyles of today
 - There were many intricate curl patterns and pinning techniques, something not typically associated with hairstyles of today so I took inspiration from the ones of the past and altered them ever so slightly so they did not necessarily read perfectly to either period, they existed in sort of a middle ground that tells a universal story.
- I paid particular attention to the disparities in hairstyles of people of different ages and social standings

● Costumes

- The most important part of the costume research was looking at the silhouettes and lines to find any commonalities that could be translated into more modern clothing
 - I decided that the skirt lines would be the most successfully modifiable and made them ascending, less full in the rear, and not corseted so they created less of an hourglass line.
 - This kept a period accurate silhouette that was more interesting and relatable to a modern audience.



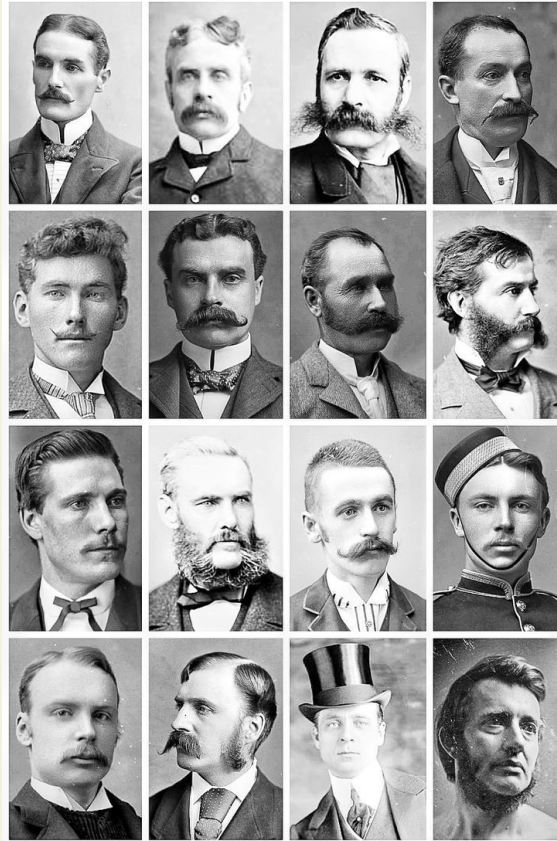
COIFFURES AND CROISSURES—(See Page 5.)



-Complex curl patterns and intricate updos as a representation of Nora and Emmy's similar yet differing ways of confronting their womanhood
 -Traditional, feminine curled sweeping lines for Emmy
 -Nursemaid in a traditional, sturdy bun



NEW STYLE HONNET, HAT AND HEAD-DRESS.



- Bold moustaches as a display of traditional masculinity
- Structured hair lines
- Temples go gray first and are a significant indicator of age



Victorian 1870-1880s Costume



Hat

- Small hat, narrow brim, tall feathers and ribbons
- Hair gathered to the back, flat on top



Top

- High neck blouse or fitted jacket
- Lace, velvet, wool
- Ruffles for trim



Skirt

- Bustle skirt
- Multiple layers of skirts with bustle effect at the back and apron on the front
- Hi-low skirt layered over full, long skirt

Accessories

- Parasol
- Gloves
- Lace or India shawl



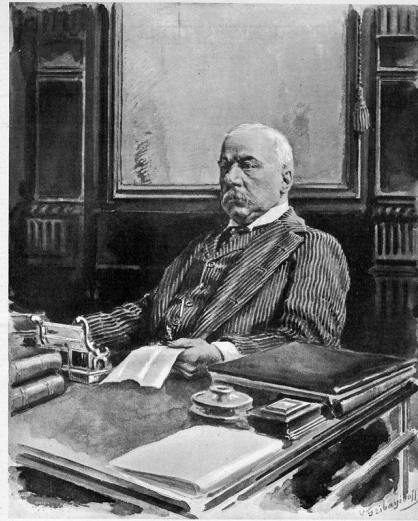
Shoes

- Side button boots

VintageDancer.com

-Nora's headstrong attitude towards her femininity and womanhood was easily identifiable through structured shoulders juxtaposed against traditionally feminine skirt lines.





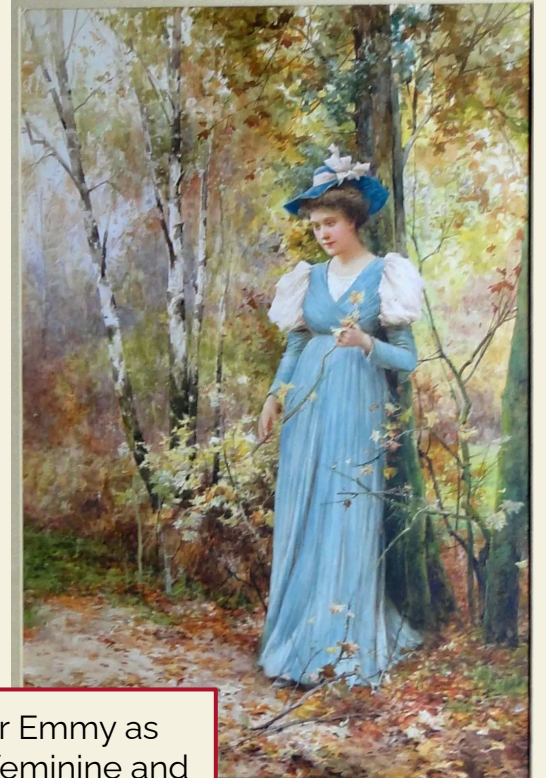
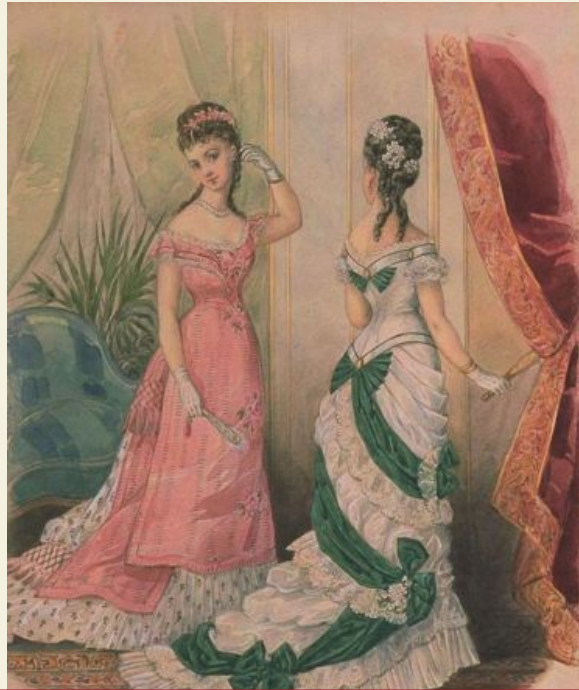
-Torvald is a successful banker but he is tired. His hair would be slightly disheveled, and his suit just a bit baggy as he could have lost weight, and therefore the ideal masculine body he once had, after Nora left.

-In order for him to fit in a more modern storyline, I decided to downplay some of the suit's extravagance especially in the neck and cravate area so it could also read as a more modern suit.





-Anne Marie is a working woman who needs to be dressed practically for her profession. I decided to remove the bonnet from her look and have her hairstyle reflect more modern motifs.



-I was particularly inspired by the middle images for Emmy as both the dresses and the hairstyles are intricate and feminine and have lines that could read to a modern audience.

Inventory and Outsourcing

● Hair and Makeup

- Given the budget, and the cost of wigs, I knew my best option would be to go through our preexisting wig inventory
- I pulled any wigs that had potential for the designs I had in mind that were of good quality
- I had to keep in mind that Nora and Emmy were mother and daughter, meaning their hair had to have similar color and porosity/texture, while considering that the actor playing Torvald would be using his natural hair so Emmy's wig also had to resemble his hair.
- Finally, I needed a wig that successfully aged Anne Marie

● Costumes

- In order to create the costumes I first spoke with Wagner's wardrobe manager to see if we had any time-period pieces in stock
- This led me to realize the only way to achieve my design would be to outsource the costume pieces
- I spoke with Polly Kendrick, a returning costume designer at Wagner who I knew had a personal costume stock, and she agreed to rent us the costume pieces needed
- Polly and I had numerous meetings after I had taken the cast's measurements about what pieces she had in stock that fit in my design and were the actors' sizes

Meeting with the Cast and Fittings

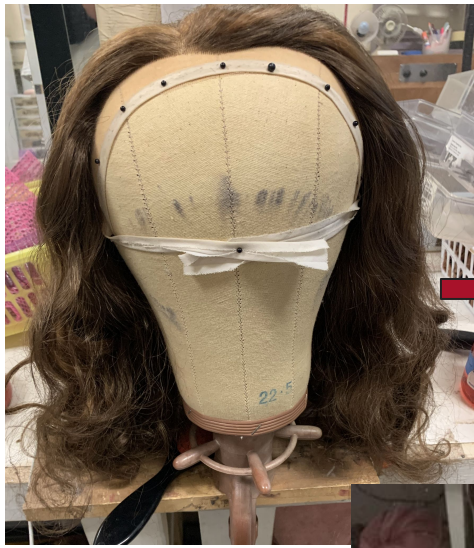
- Once the potential costume pieces had arrived at Wagner and I had pulled all of the wigs that could work, I spoke with the stage manager to set up fittings with each cast member.
 - This proved to be one of the most involved parts of the design process as it included coordinating each person's individual schedule and how many people could be in the shop at any given moment because of the Covid-19 protocols at that time
 - I took their clothing measurements as well as fit them for the wigs I had pulled which narrowed them down to the final three I ended up using.
 - I also instructed the actor playing Torvald on how to gray his temples and asked him to grow out his moustache so we did not have to apply a prosthetic every night and taught him how to apply mascara into it to thicken it.
- Something I value immensely as a designer is speaking to the actors about how they view the character they are portraying. Being able to have insight into the life being given to a character I have only analyzed on paper provides the final link in my mind that will solidify the clothing and hair and makeup choices that the actor as the character would make.



Creating the Wigs



Creating the Wigs



Creating the Wigs

Final Designs



Technical Rehearsals

- Once the designs were finalized and approved by the director, we went into the technical rehearsal process.
 - For me, this was a double-time job as I had to scrutinize the hair and makeup as well as the costumes for each actor and make the final changes that would finish the designs.
 - This included doing any extra alterations, adding a pocket watch for Torvald, adding an engagement ring for Emmy, changing Torvald's tie because the lighting caused it to be a bit overwhelming, cutting a hat from Nora's design because it was not feasible for her to act with it, and much more.

2. Production

Maintaining

Running the Show

- ◉ For hair and makeup I had to create a schedule in which I, as the only crew member due to Covid-19 restrictions, would get the actresses into wig preps and apply their wig as well as assist Torvald with his gray temple application and moustache thickening.
- ◉ At the end of the night, I reset the wigs and did any restyling or upkeep necessary to keep them true to the original design
- ◉ For costumes, I was in the dressing room between wig applications helping the actresses into their multiple layers, zipping them up, helping tie their shoes, etc.
- ◉ At the end of the night I had to make sure the clothing was laundered and altered if anything had ripped or been scuffed during the run

3. Post-Production

Returning

Strike

- When the show closed I had to strike both the costumes, wigs, and any styling products that had been used.
 - Everything had to be washed (including wigs, wig caps, combs, brushes, hairpins, etc.) and the clothing pieces were laundered.
 - The wigs were returned to the hair and makeup shop and I was in contact with Polly Kendrick to pick up the costumes she had rented us.
 - I then cleaned both the hair and makeup shop and the dressing room, as per usual protocol, but with added cleaning and disinfecting precautions due to Covid-19.
 - I inventoried the room, mentally as I was going to be the next designer in the space and did not need to leave a written inventory for somebody else who would be designing with our inventory for the first time.

4. Takeaway

Reflecting

After the Production

A Doll's House, Part 2 was one of the most exciting productions I have been able to work on. I was able to combine the knowledge I have obtained from my Gender Studies minor and apply it to my design process. While this is something I have always done subconsciously, I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to showcase it in a very obvious way as I want to work on productions that tackle feminist topics throughout my career. This show set me up to look for and recognize the works that combine all of the aspects of my education I have forged while at Wagner. I am very proud of the designs I created for this show and was thrilled to see how the characters I brought to life played out before Wagner's audience.