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'House'

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By Robyn Bradley Litchfield

Montgomery Advertiser

Could folks in 21st-century Montgomery really relate to villagers in 19th-century Norway?

Absolutely, said Alabama Shakespeare Festival actor Kathleen McCall, who portrays Norma Helmer in Frank McGuinness' adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's "A Doll's House."

"I think people will be surprised at how contemporary and accessible it is," McCall said. "People in the audience will be saying, 'I know that person' or 'Oh, I am that person' as they watch (the play)."

"A Doll's House," which is making its ASF debut, is a tale of love and deception. Nora finds her "perfect" home, which she calls her doll's house, and her marriage are not so perfect when past secrets are revealed.

"A Doll's House" previews at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, opens at 8 p.m. Friday and runs through April 14 in ASF's Octagon.

ASF resident company actor Ray Chambers, who portrays Nora's husband, Torvald Helmer, said the biggest difference in this play and more modern pieces are syntax and theater style.

"There is a certain structure we don't necessarily find familiar today," he said. "But the odd thing about 'A Doll's House' is how contemporary it is."

And compared to a modern TV melodrama or soap opera, "A Doll's House" is much more realistic, where things are shown as they really appear as opposed to being exaggerated. Ibsen was the father of realism, Chambers said.

In this particular piece, Ibsen creates a really sad, touching look at the breakdown of a marriage, McCall said. Nora, like many women even in today's society, is controlled by her husband. She puts her husband and family first.

"Not that that's a bad thing," McCall said. "But what happens sometimes is that these women look at their contributions to the world and to themselves and find something missing."

Nora and Torvald both have created this world, making everything perfect for each other, she said. "As long as they play their roles and play the game everything is fine."

When the play opens, Nora is busy preparing the house for Christmas.

"The set is light, the costumes are light," McCall said. "It's a happy, warm environment."

Torvald, Chambers said, is excited about his new job, and he is at home, where he feels warm, at home, where he feels warm, safe and cozy. Then life changes.

"I still get shocked," Chambers said. "I am in the play and know what's going to happen, and I'm still surprised by this amazing shift. It's really powerful."

A number of ASF's biggest names join McCall and Chambers in the powerful production, names such as resident company actors Greta Lambert, Philip Pleasants, Rodney Clark, Sonja Lanzener.

ASF's more recent additions Christina Traister, Martin Noyes, Andrew Petrie and Mathew Young complete the cast.

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Abstract (Document Summary)

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