Henrik Johan Ibsen was born on the 20th of March 1828, in Skien, a city in southern Norway.Almost five years should pass before the poet and playwright wrote the poem Terje Vigen (1862), the comedy Kjaerlighedens Komedie ("Love's Comedy", 1862) and the historical drama Kongs-Emnerne ("The Pretenders to the Throne", 1863). Ibsen continued his work as artistic director until 1862. However, Ibsen wished to do more. He wanted to travel abroad, to continental Europe to be inspired. More than once, during the years in Christiania, Ibsen had applied for a state grant to do so, but unsuccessfully. However, in 1863, with help from Bjornstierne Bjornson, funds were raised. Finally, Ibsen's wish to travel came true, the destination being Rome. Abroad Henrik Ibsen left Christiania, and Norway on the 5th of April 1864 to spend a year abroad, immersing himself in European culture. After a little more than two months travel, Ibsen arrived in Rome, on the 18th of June. Suzannah and Sigurd followed suit and arrived in September. Ibsen may have intended to return to homeland after a year abroad, but his prospects in Norway were minimal to non. Hence, except for two brief visits, Ibsen did not in twenty-seven years return to Norway. Of his 27-year long voluntary exile Ibsen spent about ten years in Italy (from 1864 to 1868 and from 1878 to 1885), mainly in Rome, and about seventeen years in Germany, first in Dresden, then in Munich. Ibsen's first Italian period In Rome, far from Christiania, Ibsen's life changed. Although initially his financial situation was still weak, his mood changed for the better. He had regained the desire to write. But after several unproductive years, to start over was not easy. However, it is told that when Ibsen one day, in the summer of 1865, by chance entered the Saint Peter's Basilica, he got a clear idea of what to write about, what to say. Ibsen immediately started writing, and a few months later Brand (1865), a five-act drama in verse, was a reality. Brand is considered to be Ibsen's first masterpiece. The drama narrates the story of the idealistic and uncompromising pastor Brand and his tragic life in a Norwegian mountain village. When creating the character of the protagonist Brand, Ibsen is said to have been inspired by the Danish philosopher, theologian and writer Soren Kierkegaard's (1756-1838) thoughts, which at the time was much debated. [iv] Further, the model for Brand is said to have been the Norwegian priest, Christopher Bruun (1839-1920). [v] When published, Brand created quite a stir and led to a long series of reviews in Norwegian, Danish and Swedish press. [vi] It could be said that Brand changed Ibsen's life in many ways. His previous works had not captivated the public. Consequently, up until then Ibsen's reputation as a dramatist had been mediocre and, consequently, his remuneration modest. With Brand however, the situation changed. The drama was a great success, and with it the esteem for Ibsen grew. And the year after the publication, in 1866, Ibsen was at last awarded by the Norwegian government an annual author's salary. All this brought more stability to his life, which now seemed full of perspectives. Finally, he could concentrate fully on his artistic work. In retrospect, it might even be said that Ibsen's spur-of-the-moment visit to Saint Peter's Basilica had been decisive not only for the narrative about the priest Brand. The following year Peer Gynt (1867), a five-act play in verse, was published. The first two acts of the drama were written in Rome, the third at Villa Pisani i Casamicciola in Ischia and the fourth and fifth in Sorrento. [vii] The poem is based on legendary, folklore and fairy-tale motifs and is full of allusions to contemporary people and events. At the same time, it is a profound psychological study of the protagonist Peer's character. [viii] Also Peer Gynt was well received and a success. It was also the last work Ibsen wrote before leaving Italy. The Ibsen family's first stay in

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Italy ended the year after. Germany In 1868, when Ibsen's son Sigurd turned nine, the family decided to move to Protestant Northern Europe, to Germany, where they found an educational system more to their liking. In terms of time, their stay in Germany was divided; first from 1868 to 1880 and then from 1885 to 1891. Initially, they settled in Dresden in the Kingdom of Saxony. However, in April of 1875 the Ibsen's moved to Munich in the Kingdom of Bavaria, where they stayed until 1880, with one exception; the winter 1878–1879, when Ibsen stayed in Italy. While in Germany Ibsen was productive. All together he wrote six dramas: De unges Forbund ("The League of Youths", 1869), Kejser og Galilaeer ("Emperor and Galilean", 1873), Samfundets Stotter ("Pillars of Society", 1877), Rosmersholm (1886), Fruen fra Havet ("The Woman from the Sea", 1888) and Hedda Gabler (1890).However, with the staging of Gildet paa Solhoug ("A Feast in Solhoug",1855) the sentiments changed. The drama was performed six times at Christiania Theater and played in the cities Kristiansand and Trondheim. Furthermore, in Trondheim Ibsen introduced an important novelty in the scenography; instead of addressing the audience, as was the norm, the actors, in their dialogues, addressed each other. In Ibsen's last year in Bergen Olaf Liljekrans was staged. The drama was however not well received by the audience. If an evaluation of Ibsen's Bergen Years was to be made, it could be said that only one of the dramas written during that time, Gildet paa Solhoug, had a certain success. Private life As already mentioned, Ibsen at the age of fifteen moved to Grimstad on his own. While there, in 1846, Henrik was romantically involved with the housemaid, Else Sofie Jensen. On the 9th. of October the same year, Sofie gave birth to a boy, Ibsen's son, baptized Hans Jacob Henriksen. However, the relationship with the mother, and the son, did not last. Four years later Ibsen left Grimstad to start anew in Christiania. However, it would be another six years and a new transfer before there were any changes in Henrik's private life. On the 7th of January 1856, while in Bergen, Ibsen met the young Suzannah Daae Thoresen (1836–1914), daughter of pastor Hans Conrad Thoresen (1802–58) and Sara Margrethe Daae (1806–41). After a short period of time, Henrik and Suzannah became engaged. On the 18th of June 1858 they married, in Bergen. In the following year, after moving to Christiania, their only son Sigurd was born, on the 23rd of December. However, the early years of the marriage were problematic. Both the Ibsen family and the theatre were in a difficult economic situation. The theatre was losing money and Ibsen was burdened with debts and a series of lawsuits over unpaid debts. Consequently, the family was forced to move frequently, always to increasingly squalid lodgings. All of this had driven Ibsen into a depressive state of mind. Suzannah with her strong willpower was, however, able to stabilize the family situation. And for all the years to come, she selflessly continued to be her husband's main support. Back in Christiania Already the year prior to the wedding, specifically on the 11th of August 1857, Ibsen accepted the position as artistic director of the Christiania Norske Theater. The theatre was established seven years earlier, with the intention to counterbalance the Christiania Theatre, at which actors and managers were Danish, and all plays staged imported from Copenhagen. Hence, the scope of the new playhouse was to promote dramas and vaudevilles written by contemporary Norwegian authors. On Ibsen's part, Haermaendene paa Helgeland ("The Vikings at Helgeland", 1858) was the first drama staged at the theatre.The plays from Ibsen's hand, today considered the most famous, his masterpieces, are Brand, Peer Gynt, Et dukkehjem/"A Doll's House", Gengangere /"Ghosts" and Vildanden/"The Wild Duck", written in Italy, and Hedda Gabler and

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perhaps Rosmersholm, written in Germany. [ix] Among those, in an international context, Et dukkehjem/"A Doll's house" can be named the most famous of Ibsen's dramas."The Bergen Years" The following year, in 1851, the famous violinist Ole Bull (1810–80) offered Ibsen a post in the management of the newly established Norske Theater in Bergen, the largest city on the western coast of Norway.

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