

# Ibsen Women and Juni Dahr

by Kamaluddin Nilu

"Ibsen Women" is the name of a theatre production. But this is interesting that the title of the production is closely related with the name of a person who is very much popular, renowned and world famous. Yes, the name is Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen transcends the geographical line of his birth place, Norway, and is now regarded as one of the greatest playwrights of the world.

Born in the Telemark region of Norway in 1828, Henrik Ibsen grew up in this small town. At the age of seven, Ibsen started his life with severe financial crisis and had to lead his life by himself when he was sixteen. He started his career as a

Gabler. In the year 1891 Ibsen returned to his motherland at the age sixty-three and wrote *The Master Builder*.  
Ibsen Women' was not written by him, but this is based on six female characters from his different dramas. These plays are *The Master Builder* (1892), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *Ghosts* (1881), *A Doll's House* (1879), *The Lady from the Sea* (1888) and *Vikings at Helgeland* (1858).

The idea and the concept of Ibsen Women has been developed by Juni Dahr, a leading Norwegian theatre and film actress. Dahr has been a member of the reper-

These questions inspired Dahr to present the Norwegian master through some of his female characters. 'Ibsen Women' was conceived through improvisation based on fragments of Ibsen's texts in an empty space with a minimum of decoration and props. Thus Ibsen's plays and Ibsen's characters were reconstructed again through 'Ibsen Women'.

Juni Dahr performs six central female characters in 'Ibsen Women'. Hilde from *The Master Builder*, Hedda from *Hedda Gabler*, Mrs Alving from *Ghosts*, Nora from *A Doll's House*, Ellida from *The Lady from the Sea* and Hjortis from *The Vikings*.

scape, causing heated argument and volcanic opposition and permanently altered the traditional view that wife and mother could no longer be seen as the complete definition of woman. Nora the character in *Doll's House*, realizes that she, in their perfect marriage life was a bird in a gilded cage. Now she must free herself from it and leave to become a full adult human being. Ellida the character in *The Lady from the Sea* is also a woman who wants to find herself as a human being and dreaming for freedom of her own thinking and likings. Hjortis is a character drawn from the old viking myths and sagas.

In Ibsen's female characters are found the several



JUNI DAHR

pharmacist's assistant at the very small coastal town of Grimstad. At that time he himself and also the people of the theatre world did not know that one creative dramatist was passing time in a different job. But in spite of his engagement in a profession far away from the world of play, right man in the right path came out. Ibsen became a dramatist with his first play *Catiline* at the age of twenty. Within next sixteen years he wrote eight plays. But his first successful play is *Brand and Peer Gynt* which he wrote in Italy. Ibsen spent some years in Germany where he wrote three plays and returned again in Italy. There the play *A Doll's House* was written by him. Within a decade *A Doll's House*, was a standard in most theatre repertoires — Ibsen got the first international success. By this time he wrote *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Wild Duck*, *Rosmersholm*, *The Lady from the Sea* and *Hedda*

tory company of the National Theatre of Bergen for 12 years. Henrik Ibsen was the playwright and stage manager of this theatre in Bergen before leaving from Norway to Italy in 1864. Juni Dahr was trained at the state Academy of Performing Arts in Oslo. She has played in many of the great classics — from Shakespeare to Ibsen and Chekov as well as modern experimental drama. In 1980-81 Dahr was awarded state scholarship to Poland to study at Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory in 1986. She also studied film and theatre at New York University and at the Actors' Studio in NY, with Shelly Winters. In 1988 Dahr received a Fulbright Fellowship on the project *Female Legends*.

In 1988 Juni Dahr was touring United States with her production *Joan of Arc*, at that time being a Norwegian actress she was often questioned about Henrik Ibsen's drama.

on *Helgeland*.  
Hilde's name means 'fighter'. It echoes the name of a Valkyrie in Norwegian mythology — a maiden goddess of battle, who chooses the slain heroes for Valhalla. Valhalla is the palace of bliss for the souls of slain heroes. Hilde is the symbolic character for searching the path of creative freedom. Hedda Gabler's first name originates from the Valkyrie name for battle or fight. Her last name is the upper-class maiden name that no longer legally defines her. In this play Hedda is a woman whose position in marriage is out of access to that which is most essential to human self-definition. *Ghosts*, the responding play in which the wife Mrs Alving dutifully remained in the marriage, caused even more shocked outrage with its onstage portrayal of the progressive degeneration of the diseased son, *A Doll's House*, whose ending exploded upon the social land-

representations of the human conditions, the images of the spirit struggling. Through presentation all these dimension of the characters, Juni Dahr proved herself as a representative of Ibsen's ideas and feelings. 'Ibsen Women' was first presented at the International Ibsen symposium at Yale University in April 1989. It was nominated as best one-act play at Scenario-89, in Oslo. In 1990 'Ibsen Women' has been performed in Washington DC, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Estonia, Rome, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Scotland, Soviet Union, Israel, Pakistan, India, South America, Baltic countries and China.

Juni Dahr's visit to Bangladesh with her production 'Ibsen Women' will again help us understand and ponder over Ibsen's women, the essence, the source, the spirit, that make these female characters so fascinating even today.

## Convent Eyes '95 Noble Peace Prize

The Italian religious community of Sant'Egidio has been nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize, to be announced in Sweden in October. Gemini News Service reports on why the former convent, which has been the venue for successful peace talks, hopes to be the 1995 champions of peace.

Simonetta Nardin writes from Rome

WHEN President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique visited Italy last May, the most joyful reception he attended was not held in the palazzi of Italian diplomacy, but in the richly frescoed Carmelite convent of Sant'Egidio, in the

heart of the ancient Roman district of Trastevere. It was there three years earlier, after lengthy negotiations mediated by Sant'Egidio, that Chissano signed the 1992 peace agreement that ended his country's civil war.

Sant'Egidio's members may soon prepare for a new celebration.

The community of Sant'Egidio, a Catholic lay group founded in Rome in 1968, is one of the top candidates for the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize.

The nomination, sponsored by former Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, recognises the community's commitment to the peaceful resolution of worldwide conflicts.

Last January, Sant'Egidio brought to the convent the main Algerian opposition parties — including the outlawed Islamic Front of Salvation (FIS) — to approve the so-called Rome Platform, a proposal to end the violence that has gripped the North African country since 1992.

Neither the Algerian government nor the armed Islamic groups participated in the talks, but former Algerian president Ben Bella described dialogue as the only way to stop the civil war. Anwar N. Haddam, a FIS spokesman, said the meeting was historic. The Rome platform is one of the few peace initiatives for Algeria.

Whenever Sant'Egidio makes the front page of the international press the same questions arise. Is the Vatican behind it? Is the Italian government interfering in other countries' internal affairs? Who are the powerful friends of Sant'Egidio?

Mario Marazziti, one of the community's leaders, smiles as he answers: "We are a voluntary charitable organisation committed from the outset to fight for justice and against any form of poverty. At an international level, it's just the same kind of work continuing."

Now in his forties, Marazziti was a young student when he joined the community, founded by a group of students who dedicated themselves to spread the gospel and serve the poor.

"We acted in the spirit of the recently concluded Council Vatican II that provoked a wave of reform and innovation through the Church," he recalls. "We founded popular schools for the children of poor families, we visited the elderly, the Gipsies, the mentally ill."

The convent remains the heart of the community of 15,000. Half of them live in Rome and meet for social service, worship and prayer. Another 5,000 live in other Italian cities and the rest in

## ENTERTAINMENT/TELEVISION

# Arabian Nights

**Gold Coin and Weigh Scale:** Alibaba returned with his donkey with bagsful of gold coins. Alibaba's wife could not believe that destiny had given Alibaba such wealth and so easily.

He decided to bury and thus hide the entire gold coins in the floor of their house. Instead of counting — it would be easier to weigh the gold coins. Hence, Alibaba's wife went to Kasim's house to borrow a weigh scale (Tarazu) Kasim's clever wife put a piece of wax below one of the scales — since she was suspicious and wanted to know what Alibaba and his wife were weighing this late at night.

In the morning the innocent wife of Alibaba returned the weigh scale unsuspecting of the gold coin stuck to the wax below one of the scales. Kasim's wife is aghast in disbelief at the thought of poor woodcutter Alibaba weighing gold coins.

**Alibaba Accepts Mariguna:** While in the streets of Baghdad — Alibaba could not tolerate the inhuman treatment being meted out to a very young beautiful teenage

girl by four ruffians. He tries to convince them that all women are also mother — below whose Feet Heaven lies. Finally, he pays a handful of gold coins so that this bud can go free and blossom in life into a flower. Mariguna is in tears of admiration at the magnanimity of this philanthropist man Alibaba. She begs to serve him for his lifetime and Alibaba accept Mariguna as his own daughter.

**Alibaba Reveals the Truth:** On return to his house Alibaba faces Kasim — his rich brother — who has been waiting for him all morning. A heated argument takes place where Kasim threatens and accuses him of robbing the gold coins. In a final fit of anger Kasim takes out his dagger to kill Alibaba. Mariguna covers the body of Alibaba with her body. In this emotional drama Alibaba finally reveals the truth to his greedy brother Kasim — the source of his wealth.

Episode 35 on BTV today (Friday) at 8:30 pm.

## Dark Justice: "Venus Fly Trap"



SOMEONE is killing judges, and an FBI investigator named Zackery Edwards (NED Bellamy) thinks that Judge Nicholas "Nick" Marshall (Bruce Abbott) might be the next victim. Nick is skeptical, but Edwards is convinced that several deaths of prominent judges in different states are all the work of one killer: a woman! Nick recently dismissed a case involving child molestation. The trial was closely watched by magazine reporter Rita Wells (Priscilla Barnes). Edwards suspects that Rita is the killer, but he's not sure — until she stabs him with a screwdriver.

The crafty Rita gets close enough to strangle Nick, but a well-timed interruption from his friend Kelly Cochran (Janet Gunn) saves his life. While Edwards is recovering, Nick visits him at the hospital and learns Rita is the killer. The next time Rita tries to kill him, Nick is ready. Revealing that she is haunted by horrendous child abuse from her past, Rita pulls a gun on Nick, angry at him for the unsatisfying verdict in the recent molestation trial. This time Edwards rescues Nick, shooting the tragic Rita before she can kill again. On Sunday (17-9-95) at 9:00 PM on BTV.



## Viewing Video

by Lenin Gani

**TALKING Laura.** Laura Black (Brooke Shields) has just joined her new job in California and is introduced to her colleagues. One of them being Robert Farley (Richard Thomas). Farley seems like a decent fellow however he is instantly captivated by Laura's beauty. This rapidly develops into an obsession. Each time he expresses his feelings she simply spurns them. Overcome by rejection Farley quits his job to begin a calculated campaign of terror. Laura informs but without success her bosses that Farley is now stalking her. Farley finally cracks and goes on a rampage shooting

his former colleagues at will. Even Laura is not spared. As a result of the Farley affair, California passed an anti-stalking law. Farley is now on Death Row and Laura is back at work. *Something to Talk About.* Julia Roberts is supposed to be the happily married wife of hard working banker Dennis Quaid. But her world is turned upside down when she catches him with another woman outside his place of work. Wild thoughts race through the mind as to motives for her husband's action. She is not helped by her family who only add fuel to the anger.



## Here Come the Tagore Rains Again

by Staff Correspondent



A cultural function titled 'Rabindranather Barshar Gan O Aalap Alochona' was organised at the Isfendiar Zahed Hassan auditorium of Viswa Shahitya Kendro on August 29 evening. Participants in the show were: Mustafa Nurul Islam, Kalim Sharafi, Mohammed Anisur Rahman, Maleka Azim Khan, Tajin Chowdhury, Mohiduzzaman Chowdhury and Mansura Begum. Production responsibilities were carried out by Anisur Rahman.

not only for their music, but also for the mirth of epic qualities," said Rahman at the outset, adding: "There's a philosophy of life in these."

Discussing briefly on inspirational aspects of Tagore's rainy season songs, Mustafa Nurul Islam said: "There's no exact explanation, or definition of songs. It is a medium that can easily communicate; it doesn't need somebody else to make you understand."

The function emphasised in exploring the intrinsic val-

ues of Tagore's season-based songs. The discussants explored avenues finding out reasons behind the Nobel poet's composition of rainy-season songs.

Islam's elaboration was followed by a chorus. *Oti Bhairab Harashe* — in appraisal of the rainy season. The singles of Kalim Sharafi, Monsura Begum, Tajin Chowdhury, Maleka Begum, Mohiduzzaman Chowdhury and Anisur Rahman enchanted the listeners who left the Kendro, warm hearted.

Europe, Africa Asia and Latin America.

"Sant'Egidio's members have all different sorts of social and cultural backgrounds, but they all spend some of their time with the poor, serving in our soup kitchen, helping AIDS patients, or teaching Italian to newly arrived immigrant," says Marazziti.

The soup kitchen, founded six years ago, serves hot meals four nights a week to almost 2,000 people, most of them Eastern Europeans.

The jump to international involvement was not intentional, says Marazziti, denying that former students wanted to play amateur peace brokers. He says their involvement is a natural extension of what he calls Sant'Egidio's mission — to work against social injustice.

Sant'Egidio's Roman location — an international crossroads and the seat of the Pope, with whom they have good relations — is advantageous. Bishops from around the world, heads of states

and government, frequent the Eternal City to visit the Pope.

And the Italian capital is a natural meeting point of the region's three main cultural and religious worlds — the Islamic, the Christian, and the Jewish.

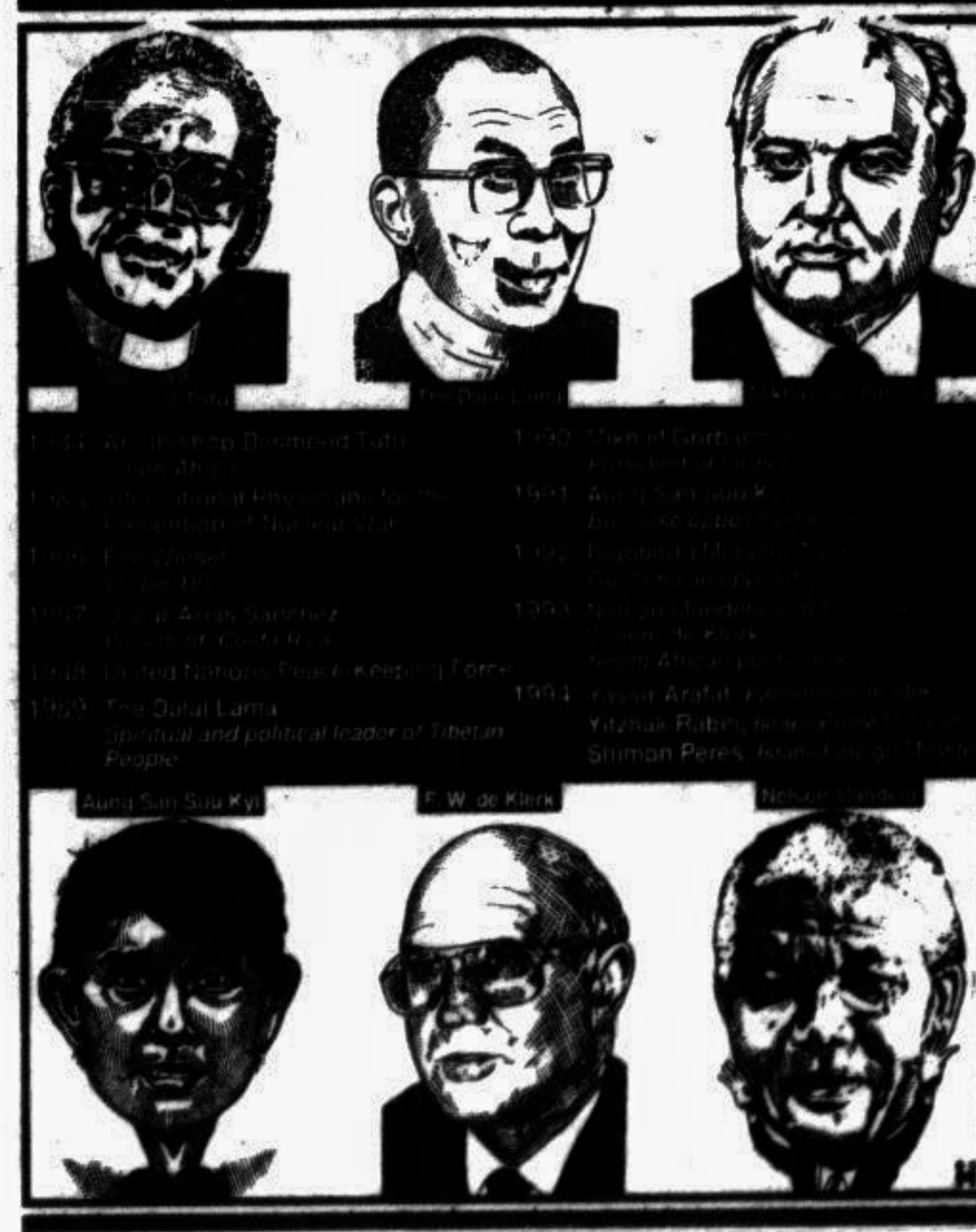
The community's international activity is not under the umbrella of the Holy See. But, acting in the shadow of St Peter is not always an advantage.

The Algerian government was particularly annoyed that the talks were held in Rome — fearing Vatican interference.

The president of the community, Professor Andrea Riccardi, loves to say: "Rome is closer to Algiers than to London."

Sant'Egidio frequently organises meetings of religious leaders in Rome and an annual all-religion prayer service for peace, part of its ongoing search for global understanding. Simonetta Nardin is a journalist based in Rome.

## Nobel peace prize winners



ENGLISH		
NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. Don Juan	(Rom)	Marlon Brando/Johnny Depp/ Fay Dunaway
2. Dangerous Minds	(Com)	Michelle Pfeiffer
3. Stalking Laura	(Thriller)	Brooke Shields/ Richard Thomas
4. Daniella Steel's Vanished	(Drama)	George Hamilton
5. The Onion Field		James Woods/ Ted Danson
6. Oleanna		William H Macy/ Debra Eisenstadt
7. Night Train to Kathmandu	(Adv)	Pernell Roberts
8. Summer Slam -95	(WWF)	
9. Off the Top Rope	(Act)	
10. Cage 3	(Act/Thriller)	Michael Pare/ Billy Dee Williams/ Patrick Bergin
11. Triple Cross	(Act/Thriller)	Dennis Franz
12. Caught in the Crossfire	(Act/Thriller)	
13. Tales from the Hood	(Horror)	
14. Frankenstein Sings the Movie	(*)	
15. The Howling New Moon Rising	(*)	
16. A Kid in King Arthur's Court (Walt Disney)	(Family)	
HINDI		
NAME	TYPE	CAST
1. Gundaraj	(Action)	Ajay Devgan/ Kajol/ Amrish Puri
2. Muthi Bhur	(Social)	Kumar Gohrab Poonam Dhelan /Danny
Zameen	(Musical)	
3. Songs of Manisha Koirala	(Musical)	

Source: Film Fair Video and other clubs.