

The New York Times

June 17, 2004

THEATER IN REVIEW; A Man, a Woman and a Baby, Locked in a Northern Nightmare

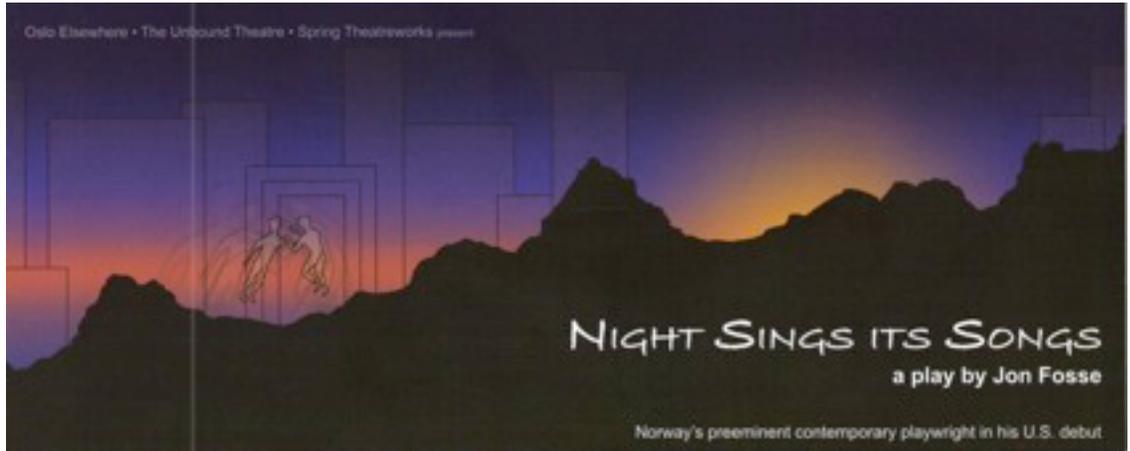
By ANITA GATES

'Night Sings Its Songs'
The Culture Project: 45
Bleecker

It's a harmless, neutral image: the Young Man is lying on his living room sofa, reading a book. But when the Young Woman enters and begins to complain ("We cannot live like this," "No, I can't handle much more of this"), it becomes clear that this is all the Young Man ever does. It's not just that he doesn't have a job or doesn't do enough writing to call himself a writer; he won't even go to the store for groceries or take a walk or, most of the time, check on the baby (their first child, a son).

His wife, whose friends don't come over anymore because his presence is so off-putting, is understandably frustrated. His parents arrive for an oddly short visit; the Young Woman decides to spend the evening with a girlfriend (or so she says); the baby cries occasionally; and there's a late-night confrontation.

That's the gist of Jon Fosse's stark, intriguing one-act drama, which continues at 45 Below, the theater's basement stage, through June 26, with Louis Cancelmi and Anna Guttormsgaard as the protagonists. Mr. Fosse (pronounced FAH-suh), who is Norwegian, and Sarah



Cameron Sunde, the American who translated his play, have an ear for conversation, particularly for the synergy of repetition and for the fine line between generality and allegory.

It's tempting to label the play, with its dual postpartum depression, marital alienation and extreme reactions, quintessentially Scandinavian. If it is, that's only because the playwrights and filmmakers in that part of the world have a reputation for reflecting bleak universal truths.

Ms. Sunde, who also directed, has made some interesting choices for her cast of five, who are uniformly excellent. Mr. Cancelmi's character spends most of the play wearing a blank stare. Ms. Guttormsgaard's smiles when she says awful things to him. It seems fitting when everyone agrees that the baby doesn't look like either of them. ANITA GATES

Oslo Elsewhere • The Unbound Theatre • Spring Theatreworks present

NIGHT SINGS ITS SONGS
by Jon Fosse
directed and translated by Sarah Cameron Sunde
dramaturgy by Marie-Louise Miller

with Louis Cancelmi*, Diane Ciesla*, Peter Davies*, Anna Guttormsgaard, George Hannah*
Misha Siegel-Rivers*, Stage Manager • Felicity Crew, Asst. Stage Manager
Lauren Helpem, Set Designer • Roma Flowers, Lighting Designer • Maline Casta, Costume Designer
Christopher Tin, Composer • Ryan Tilke, Sound Designer • Faye Armon, Properties Designer
Liz Ortiz-Mackes, Casting • Jim Baldassare, Press Representation

June 5 - 26: Thursdays - Mondays at 8pm
(except June 6 at 2pm - talkback to follow)
at The Culture Project - 45 Bleecker
45 Below (at Lafayette Street) \$15
reservations: 212.352.0255
or go to theatermania.com
special events and group rates: 212.502.8609

between day and night • dream and nightmare
Jon Fosse is currently considered Norway's "biggest cultural export" and one of Europe's most highly acclaimed heirs to Pinter, Beckett and Ibsen.

Special Events

Saturday May 22 at 7:30 pm - \$50 Launch Party Benefit for the production at the David Zwirner Gallery, 525 W. 19th	Tuesday June 15 at 3pm and 7pm - \$10 A Translation Symposium curated with Paul Walsh of San Francisco's A.C.T.	Tuesday June 22 at 7pm - \$10 A reading of the play in the original Norwegian (nynorsk)
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The U.S. premiere of *Night Sings its Songs* is made possible in part by The Royal Norwegian Consulate General, Smorgaschef Restaurant, SAS and the American Scandinavian Foundation.

*Denotes members of Actors' Equity

The New York Times

August 21, 2006

Young Suicide in the Eyes of Norwegian Playwrights Old and New, Ibsen and Non-Ibsen

By [ANITA GATES](#)

At 59E59 Theaters, two Norwegian plays begin and end with the suicide of a young woman. The plays on this double bill could not be more different in depth and tone.

One, [Henrik Ibsen](#)'s "Rosmersholm," is the story of a former minister, recently widowed, who lives in what he calls "a spiritual marriage" with a pretty young libertine. The other, Jon Fosse's "Deathvariations," watches as an older couple try to come to terms with their daughter's death as they look back on their marriage and her life. "Deathvariations" is by far the more successful.

Mr. Fosse, born in 1959, has been compared to Ibsen and to Beckett, and it is easy to see his work as Ibsen stripped down to its emotional essentials. But it is much more. For one thing, it has a fierce poetic simplicity.

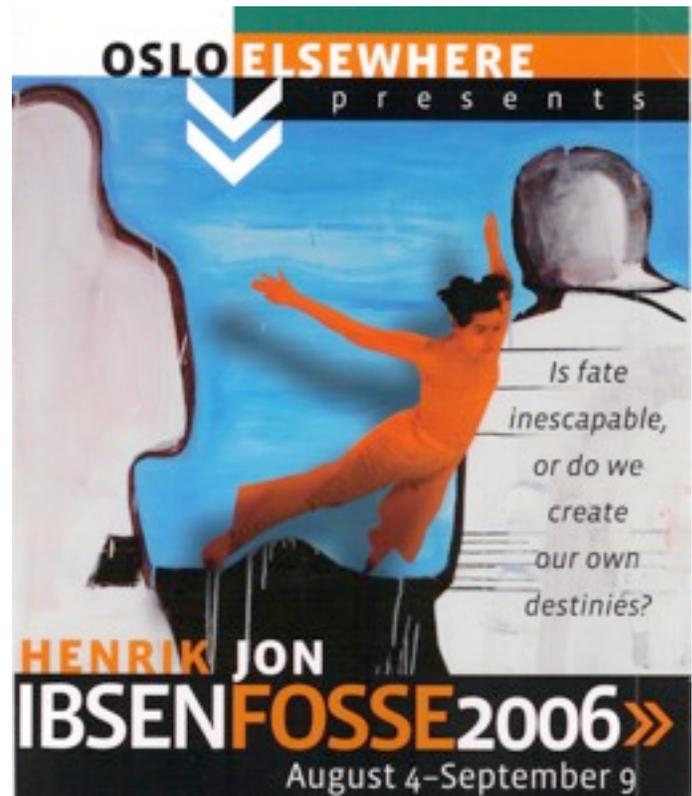
"He comes walking towards me with rain in his hair," says the Daughter (Natalia Payne), referring to the Friend (Charles Borland), who represents something like the seductive antithesis of the life force. The Friend shares an important thought with her: "You know, love always hides." The Older Woman (Diane Ciesla) remembers seeing her daughter lying dead: "She wasn't in her face anymore."

As the Older Woman and the Older Man (Dick Hughes) begin confronting their grief, in opposing ways, "deathvariations" turns to their younger selves (Deborah Knox and David L. Townsend), back when they were newly married, expecting a child and moving into a horrible basement apartment.

Everything is up in the air, but then, as one character says, "that's what life is." Later, when the Young Woman learns that the Young Man is having an affair ("Tell me her name." "Now you know."), it has the inevitability of sunset.

The cast of "deathvariations" is sometimes stunningly in touch with Mr. Fosse's worldview. And no small credit goes to Sarah Cameron Sunde, who both translated and directed the play. The seemingly simple art of blocking doesn't normally come in for critical praise, but there is one moment — when Ms. Sunde allows the past to cross in front of the present — that carries layers of meaning.

"Rosmersholm" has been translated into straightforward contemporary English ("I'll give it to you straight, Professor") by Anna Guttormsgaard, who also plays the protagonist, Rebecca West. But it is still unmistakably Ibsen, whose earnest, declarative dialogue sounds very much like [Woody Allen](#)'s serious side. (And we thought Mr. Allen was only emulating [Ingmar Bergman](#) all these years.)



It is clear right away that Rebecca is a libertine because she is an artist and walks around barefoot. (Rebecca West, the 20th-century British author, took her name from the character, not the other way around, by the way.) Ms. Guttormsgaard gives a quietly realistic performance but never conveys the passion and the beauty that have won the heart and soul of John Rosmer (Charles Parnell) without bothering to seduce him physically. He refers at one point to "our pure friendship." Not that anyone in town believes it, since the two are living together.

"Rosmersholm" has long been considered one of Ibsen's more difficult works. On the positive side, its plot twists are appealingly Hitchcockian. But its overall premise can seem a bit puzzling in this time and place because New York theatergoers are likely to peg Professor Kroll (Neal Lerner) as the villain the moment he begins talking about banning books at the school because he considers them immoral. And when Rosmer acknowledges having abandoned his "Christian belief" to become a free thinker, today's audiences may not automatically consider that a tragedy.

Ibsen's characters do, however, concern themselves with one question that resonates all over the place in the early 21st century: how to ennoble the human mind. Happiness? Maybe. Or pain, as Rosmer says, "if one can get through it, over it."

"Rosmersholm" and "deathvariations" continue through Sept. 9 at 59E59 Theaters, 59 East 59th Street, Manhattan; (212) 279-4200.

Oslo Elsewhere presents the U.S. premiere of

SA KA LA

by Jon Fosse

directed and translated by Sarah Cameron Sunde

September 6 to 27

Theatres at 45 Bleecker Street

Two brothers-in-law discover that they both slept with their mother-in-law's younger friend. The mother-in-law turns sixty today, but before she can get to her party, she suffers a stroke. Her daughters are by her side at the hospital, but the party waits since no one can be reached. The mother tries to speak but where there once were words, now there are only sounds. Sounds like 'sa ka la' until the estranged son appears....

A play about expectations - especially amongst family - and the narrow cliff we cling to when the unexpected happens.



our mission

Oslo Elsewhere's mission is to bring the most innovative plays and ideas about contemporary theater from Norway to the United States, and vice versa.

We are passionate about developing new translations to their fullest potential and producing bold, relevant, fiercely theatrical plays; plays with space, plays with a pulse, plays that challenge our sensibilities and provoke our audience beyond the everyday.

our history

2003 Sarah Cameron Sunde and Anna Gutto meet and quickly realize they share a common passion for Jon Fosse's plays and a vision for how to translate and produce his plays for American audiences.

2004 January in Oslo: we have a closed reading of Sarah's new American-English translation of *Night Sings Its Songs* with some of Norway's finest actors and Jon Fosse, soliciting feedback from Norwegian theater practitioners. Norway's biggest news outlets cover the story. June in New York: *Night Sings Its Songs* opens at The Culture Project's 45 Below Theater. Our production marks the official debut of Jon Fosse's work in the United States and he attends the opening.

2005 Anna and Sarah are commissioned to create a performance for the King and Queen of Norway on their visit to New York. A concert event entitled *Variations On A Theme* is the result. Oslo Elsewhere incorporates as a New York not-for-profit corporation and qualifies as a tax exempt 501(c)(3) entity.

2006 March in Oslo: we collaborate with Nationaltheatret (The National Theater of Norway) to workshop Sarah's new American-English translation of *Death Variations* by Jon Fosse, and Anna and Bridgette Wimberly's new translation/adaptation of *Rosmersholm* by Henrik Ibsen. August in New York: *IBSEN/FOSSE 2006* opens at 59E59 Theaters; *Death Variations* and *Rosmersholm* run in rep for 5 weeks. Oslo Elsewhere is asked to represent the United States in a project of Det Åpne Teater (The Open Theater - Norway's theater for new play development). We pick Sheila Callaghan as the American playwright and we're paired with Lisa B. Lie as the Norwegian playwright. We translate both plays, and readings are presented in New York and Oslo.

2007 Lisa Dozier becomes our Executive Director. PAJ (Performing Arts Journal) publishes Sarah's translation of *Death Variations*, which formally introduces American theater academics and practitioners to Jon Fosse's work. Oslo Elsewhere formulates a three-year plan: the priority is to continue creating a body of work for Fosse in the U.S. Oslo Elsewhere will produce *Sa Ka La* by Jon Fosse in late 2008; then a modern take on *The Master Builder* by Henrik Ibsen in 2009; and then another play by Jon Fosse (to be announced) in 2010.

jon fosse biography

Jon Fosse, the Norwegian dramatist, novelist and poet, was born in 1959 on the west coast of Norway and now resides in Bergen. The author of some thirty books and twenty-six plays that have been translated into over 40 languages, he is perhaps the most provocative, celebrated, and produced contemporary playwright in Europe right now. His novels include *Red*, *Black*, *Closed Guitar*, *The Boathouse*, *The Bottle Collector*, and *Melancholia I-II*. Since 1993, Fosse has focused primarily on playwriting. He quickly received international acclaim, particularly after Claude Regy (legendary French director of Pinter's work) came out of retirement to direct his play *Someone is Going to Come*. Afterwards, *Le Monde* dubbed Fosse "the Beckett of the 21st Century." His plays, including *And We'll Never Be Parted*, *Night Sings Its Songs*, *The Guitar Man*, *Dream of Autumn*, *Girl on the Sofa*, and *deathvariations*, have been produced on major stages across Europe, as well as around the world in countries such as Japan, Australia, and Chile. He is particularly noted for having created his own theatrical language, at once intense and poetic.



oslo elsewhere

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lisa dozier executive producer

In addition to her work with Oslo Elsewhere, Lisa is a freelance producer and also produces and curates at the Emelin Theatre. Recent NY Credits include: *Murderers* (Emelin), *The Piper* (NYMF 2007), *Surface to Air* (Off Broadway, Symphony Space), *The Polish Play* (Walkerspace/ Katharsis); *Character* (Prospect); *Brian Charles Rooney: Live* (Zipper); *Warrior* (NYMF 2006); *Behind the Limelight* (NYMF 2006); *Hot and Sweet* (NYMF 2006); *Ibsen/Fosse 2006* with Oslo Elsewhere at 59 E 59: Rosmersholm, *deathvariations*; *Manhattan Madcaps of 1924*; *Jeff Daniels' Apartment 3A*; *The Ballad of Bonnie and Clyde* (NYMF 2005). Previously, she was on the artistic staff at Manhattan Theatre Club (Doubt, Reckless, Rabbit Hole, Brooklyn Boy, 5 by Tenn, A Picasso, etc.) and has also worked at the New 42nd Street, American Repertory Theatre and New York Stage & Film. Upcoming projects include: Katharsis Theatre's new adaptation of Moliere's *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, Martin Fox's *Two Handers*, set to be directed by Austin Pendleton, and Frank Strausser's *The Split*. Lisa holds a BA in theatre management from Florida State.

anna gutto co-artistic director

Anna is originally from Norway, started her professional career in Europe, working with acknowledged actors and award winning directors including Stein Winge and Sven Nordin, Bjørn Sundquist and Hilda Hellwiig performing such roles as Solveig in Henrik Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Sarah in Harold Pinter's *The Lover*, and Lady Anne in *Richard III*. Her one woman Show Fidel's *Island* about a Norwegian woman wanting to travel to Cuba was a great success at the Molde International Jazz Festival the year Buena Vista Social Club was the festival's main attraction. In New York, she has received critical acclaim for her work on Jon Fosse's US-debut *Night Sings Its Songs*, *The Workroom* and Henrik Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* among others. Her newest film *Gone With the Woman*, where she appears alongside Peter Stormare, won TOP FEATURE AWARD at Hollywood Film Festival, and was chosen as Norway's entry for the Academy Award nominations for best foreign film. Other film credits include, *Liliana*, *Rebecca*, *Shutterbug*, *Poise* and *Anniversary* (Best Ensemble Award, First Run Film Festival). Anna Gutto has been awarded the prestigious 2-year Working Artist Grant from the Norwegian Government, grants from the Norwegian Art Council, and has written, co-written, translated and adapted several plays, as well as been commissioned to write essays for books and industry publications.

sarah cameron sunde co-artistic director

Sarah is a New York-based theater director, specializing in new American plays and contemporary plays in translation. Since 2003, she has worked with Jon Fosse (Norway's leading contemporary dramatist) as his director/translator in the United States. Her 2004 production of *Night Sings Its Songs* formally introduced American audiences to his work and her 2006 production of *deathvariations* led the *New York Times* to call Fosse's work "fierce poetic simplicity". Sarah's work as Fosse's translator has been published in *PAJ* (Performing Arts Journal) and *Words Without Borders*. As a core member of Theatre Without Borders and a co-founder of the Translation Think Tank, she has spoken in venues throughout the country on the art of translation. Other international directing work includes U.S. premiere productions of *The Asphalt Kiss* by Nelson Rodrigues (59E59 Theaters/Drama Desk nominated production) and *Mirita* by Christopher Dunkley (Cherry Lane Studio), and other work abroad in England and Norway. Since 2001, Sarah has been the Associate Director of New Georges, an OBIE-winning downtown theater that develops and produces ambitious new work by women. New Georges directing credits include *Good Heif* by Maggie Smith, *Velma*, *Dear* by Carson Kretzer, our week of *365 Days/365 Plays* by Suzan-Lori Parks, and numerous readings and workshops. Residencies and development programs: Voice & Vision's ENVISION Retreat, Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, New Harmony Project and Hermitage Foundation Residency. Awards include an American Scandinavian Society Artist Award and a Princess Grace Directing Fellowship/Robert & Gloria Houseman Theater Award.