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"Howard wanted to do this on the big stage...he didn't see it as a small domestic drama."

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For the National Theatre's production of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, Crowley presents his audience with a contradiction. "Even though we're doing it in the period of the late 1800s, it won't look very Victorian. The clothes are meant to look Victorian (sketches 7, 8, and 9), but the actual house is very spare and very un-English," says Crowley.

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Pour la représentation de Hedda Gabler de Ibsen au Théâtre National, Crowley a présenté cette contradiction au public: "Même si la pièce se situe à la fin du 19ème siècle, elle ne semble pas très victorienne. Les costumes doivent sembler victoriens (croquis 7, 8, et 9) mais la maison elle-même est très clairesemée et pas du tout anglaise," dit Crowley.

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Für die Aufführung von Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* im National Theatre konfrontiert Crowley die Zuschauer mit einem Widerspruch. "Obwohl das Stück im späten 19. Jahrhundert spielt, ist es nicht sehr viktorianisch ausgestattet. Die Kostüme sollen zwar viktorianisch aussehen (Skizzen 7, 8 und 9), aber die Einrichtung ist sehr kärglich und überhaupt nicht im englischen Stil", sagt Crowley.

room. Consisting of a gallery running across the top with a line of railings, the upper level also contains a full-length portrait of General Gabler and the doors to Hedda's bedroom.

"There are strange perspectives working all around," Crowley notes. "There isn't a straight line or a 90 degree angle anywhere. I'm playing with shapes and spaces in order to create mood—a sense of terrible claustrophobia, and also a terrible emptiness.

"That sounds contradictory, but there are two things happening—the fact that they can't actually furnish this place properly; they haven't really moved in yet, they've inherited the furniture; and the space isn't an easy space to live in—you'd find it a difficult one to actually come to grips with, especially as a young married couple with problems.

"I've got a tilted floor which rakes at a peculiar angle. It rakes across the stage rather than straight up and down. It's quite steep, about one in ten. There's a touch of the Daphne du Maurier about it. It reminds me of novels like *Rebecca*, houses which are battling with the elements all the time."

The world around the house can be seen in the form of leafless trees and yellow-brown leaves lying on the ground on the sides of the stage slightly below stage level. Upstage left, a wall of translucent screens (which supposedly looks onto Tesman's garden) is plastered with wind-blown leaves. At one point the doors which are set into these screens are blown open by wind and leaves blow through.

"The other thing done," Crowley says, "is to take the stove out of the alcove where it is normally shoved and put it absolutely slap-bang in the middle so it's the central point." With a small circle of seats in dark green leather around it, the stove also has a thick black pipe which extends from the top, 6 meters straight up into the air, ending in a circular shape. "It's like a compass point to the room and everything else radiates out from the stove," the designer notes.

A non-functional staircase begins on the upper level above General Gabler's portrait and extends and recedes up and off towards the ceiling, as if to infinity. In the small triangular area of wall above the base of this staircase, there is painted a blue sky with white clouds—a bright place that Hedda can never reach.

Speaking about using non-realistic elements in this set, Crowley states, "There's a fine balance between it being a piece of naturalism and it going into a much more surrealist, slightly

more symbolic piece of work. I think, with Ibsen, you have to take on board all the symbols and the expressionism that he deals with, and you've got to make it work—I think you deny the symbolism at your peril. At the same time, he brought into the world of drama a kind of realism that was so fantastically new.

"I work very closely with the text," Crowley asserts. "I always take on board what an author says, but I don't do it slavishly. I would like to think that I'm methodical enough to do what Ibsen asks me to do, because usually there's a very good reason—it's just not whim. Given that, I then take that on board and try to revitalise it, in whatever way is suitable, and that's very much a two-way conversation with the director.

"Some directors are more adventurous than others. Howard is very much a man who has come to the play with a clean, clear way of looking at it. Even though we're doing *Hedda Gabler* in the period it was written in, the late 1800s, in Scandinavia, it won't look very Victorian. I mean the clothes are meant to look Victorian and are very much of the period, but the actual house is very spare and very un-English.

"I suppose I am constantly going for a mood," Crowley concludes, "a mood that Ibsen is creating with his words."

After designing this succession of large-scale productions, of which *Ghetto* in April 89 on the Olivier stage will be the latest, Crowley intends to take a short break. Then? "I don't plan anything," the designer says. "There's no great master plan of what I should be doing and where I should be working. I need to like the piece. It helps if it's a well-written play," he laughs.

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