

Ensemble Theatre Company, Opening Night

# Ghosts On Stage & Smiles Off

**T**RAGIC DRAMAS SPAWN CHANGE and attract a sense of hope as a counter-balance to hopelessness in Henrik Ibsen's play *Ghosts*, currently being staged by the Ensemble Theatre Company.

Darkly comic scathing commentary on 19th century morality still reverberates with contemporary audiences, remaining one of Ibsen's most-produced plays more than a century after it was written. Executive Artistic Director Jonathan Fox directs the production that runs through April 24th.

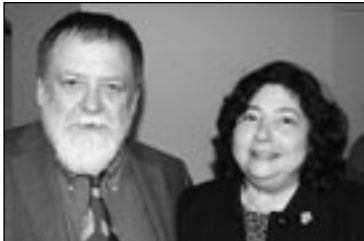
"I'm surprised by how much humor is in the play," said Mr. Fox. "Ibsen has a reputation for being very dark and gloomy, but while *Ghosts* is a tragedy, it feels fresh and vital and thought-provoking. We are working with a marvelous translation that has blown the dust off the play. Our highly-creative design team is approaching the play with a modern eye, and we have a top-notch cast to bring it to life."



Maureen Silliman and Patricia Leyva Kruse at the Opening Night reception



Wyatt Fenner and Jonathan Fox, Artistic Director



Michael Rothhaar and Deborah Rothhaar Lewis

On an isolated estate, Mrs. Alving, a wealthy, spirited woman has tried to protect her family and herself from the philandering of her now deceased husband. Her son's return to the family home unearths buried family secrets and unleashes powerful forces of destiny. *Ghosts* is a riveting, haunting tale of a woman caught in the binds of a highly moralistic society. Internationally acclaimed during his lifetime and 100 years after his death, Ibsen remains amongst the most popularly studied and produced playwrights ever. He had written over 25 plays in his life time, including *Peer Gynt*, *A Doll's House*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Wild Duck* and *Hedda Gabler*. Award-winning New York actor, Maureen Silliman, plays the formidable Mrs. Alving, the matriarch of the family.

She has performed on and off-Broadway, in addition to some of the most prestigious

regional theatres in the country.

Mr. Manders, the self-absorbed and moralistic pastor, is played by Gregory North. An accomplished performer, he has worked on and off- Broadway, in addition to touring nationally with *Show Boat*, *Les Misérables* and *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Returning to Ensemble Theatre after last season's *Loot* is Wyatt Fenner in the role of Oswald Alving, the prodigal son who pays the ultimate price for his father's promiscuous behavior.

Michael Rothhaar, who played the lead in Ensemble's 2007 production of *The Uneasy Chair*, will play the besotted Dickensian ne'er-do-well, Engstrand. A professional actor and director since 1975, his work has encompassed Broadway, and Off-Broadway.

Having appeared in Ensemble's production of 2008 production of *Therese Raquin* as a Santa Barbara City College student, Jessica Spaw, who went on to complete her degree in drama at University of California, Irvine, plays Regina, Mrs. Alving's housekeeper and the object of Oswald's affection.

Ensemble Theatre Company of Santa Barbara was founded in 1979 and is housed at the intimate Alhecama Theatre located in the historic Presidio District in downtown Santa Barbara at 914 Santa Barbara Street.

Performances for *Ghosts* run Tues - Sat at 8pm and Sun at 2pm, with a newly-added special Sat 4pm matinee performance on April 9th, and a Sun 7pm evening performance on April 17th. Single tickets range from \$30 to \$55. Discounts for seniors and students. For tickets call (805) 965-5400 or visit: [www.ensembletheatre.com](http://www.ensembletheatre.com).



Maureen Silliman and Wyatt Fenner in Ensemble Theatre Company's *Ghosts*

Photo: David Bazemore



Bob Johnson, Jessica Spaw, and Ruth Matuszeski



Gregory North with Joyce and Heinrich Falk