



# Harriet Bosse: Strindberg's Muse and Interpreter

*Carla Waal B.S. M.S. Ph.D.*

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## **Harriet Bosse: Strindberg's Muse and Interpreter** Carla Waal B.S. M.S. Ph.D.

Harriet Bosse, a delicate beauty with rich theatrical talent, was an inspiration for the prominent and controversial playwright August Strindberg. After their three-year marriage collapsed, she became his interpreter to the world, guardian of the Strindberg legend.

This first biography of Harriet Bosse in English explores her own important career as an actress on the Swedish stage, as well as her influence on Strindberg's work. Waal has separated Harriet Bosse from her romanticized image in the shadow of August Strindberg and has shown her as a person, fascinating and self-sufficient. Her daughter-in-law Randi Wingård said: "Harriet was a great personality, and even if she was tiny, one could not help noticing her in any gathering. She attracted everyone's attention." While tracing the development of Bosse's career, her triumphs and disappointments, Waal chronicles the beginnings of Swedish filmmaking in early silent films as well as four decades of major developments in Swedish theatre.

But Bosse's marriage to Strindberg and her relationship to his writing are an integral part of her story, and Waal also details the couple's stormy marriage, from 1901 to 1903, the reasons for its failure, and the personal and career influences they continued to exert on each other. As Strindberg's inspiration for many literary works, Bosse was alternately vilified and idealized. Much of what Strindberg wrote after meeting Bosse reflects his adoration of her and his despair over the problems of their relationship. She inspired two of his major works of poetry, "The Golden Eagle" and "The Dutchman," in addition to the character of the virgin princess in *Swan White*. On stage she played eight minor and six major Strindberg roles, including Indra's Daughter in *A Dream Play* and Christina in *Queen Christina*.

Much information for this book is drawn from previously inaccessible sources, including unpublished materials in libraries, archives, and private collections, mostly in Scandinavia. Waal interviewed Strindberg and Bosse's daughter Anne Marie Wyller Hagelin (to whom the book is dedicated) as well as other members of Bosse's family and a wide range of actors, critics, directors, and scholars. Forty-one photographs are included in the text.

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