

## SYNOPSIS

Set in a fictional modern-day coastal California town, *ENEMIES OF A HOMETOWN* by Louise Marie Kiesel, reimagines Henrik Ibsen's classic *AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE*, as an American story about the idealist versus the realist that sheds light on the idiom that "all politics is local." Conflict arises when Doctor Stockman, an environmental scientist, who is assisting with the planning of a magnet school discovers the grounds are contaminated and commits to his duty to inform the public. His brother, who is the mayor of the town and a popular pastor, wants to keep the truth buried and battles to silence his brother. Dr. Stockman, his family, and his friend face public backlash from the community but remain steadfast in their commitment to reveal the truth, but at what cost?

## GOAL

My production goal is to achieve what Ibsen articulated in an 1874 speech titled, *The Task of the Poet*.

"...I realized that to be a poet means essentially to see, but mark well, to see in such a way that whatever is seen is perceived by the audience just as the poet saw it. But only what has been lived through can be seen in that way and accepted in that way. But no poet lives through anything in isolation. What he lives through all of his countrymen live through with him."

In my reimagining of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, I purposely used the translation by Elenor Marx-Aveling who was Karl Marx's daughter to understand the original text as much as possible.

In his book, *Ibsen*, Harold Clurman wrote "Dr. Stockmann is Ibsen." It was important for me to keep him alive in my reimagining of his work, not just his story and themes, but the spirit of the playwright himself. Ibsen enjoyed playing with the conflict that exists between opposites and to call out hypocrisy where he saw it. He viewed humans as walking contradictions and it's fitting that it's been said that his dying words were "On the contrary." I hope Ibsen would be pleased to see how I reimagined his characters, especially, Petra who contradicts the famous line in the ending of his play "the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone," by saying, "On the contrary Dad ... the strongest one, is the one who moves others, starts the sequence ... starts the movement for change."

And Ibsen did just that. During his time, his work was attacked because he revealed uncomfortable truths about the human condition, but he remained steadfast and transformed the theatre so much so that he is revered as the father of modern drama. My goal is to pay tribute to Henrik Ibsen but also to heed what Arthur Miller referred to as "Ibsen's Warning" about modern society and democracy in America today.