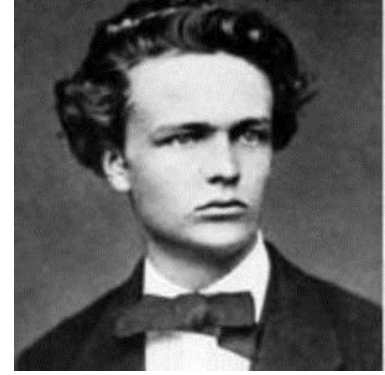


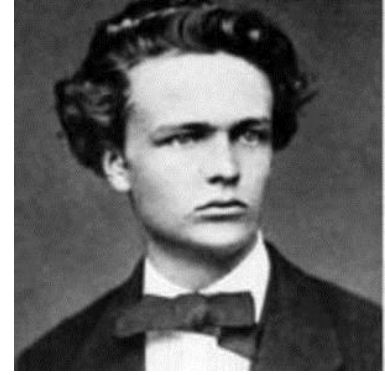
August Strindberg (Sweden)



Johan August Strindberg (22 January 1849 – 14 May 1912) was a Swedish playwright, novelist, poet, essayist and painter. A prolific writer who often drew directly on his personal experience, Strindberg's career spanned four decades, during which time he wrote over sixty plays and more than thirty works of fiction, autobiography, history, cultural analysis, and politics. A bold experimenter and iconoclast throughout, he explored a wide range of dramatic methods and purposes, from naturalistic [tragedy](#), [monodrama](#), and history plays, to his anticipations of [expressionist](#) and [surrealist](#) dramatic techniques. From his earliest work, Strindberg developed innovative forms of dramatic action, language, and visual composition. He is considered the "father" of modern [Swedish literature](#) and his [The Red Room](#) (1879) has frequently been described as the first modern Swedish novel.

The [Royal Theatre](#) rejected his first major play, [Master Olof](#), in 1872; it was not until 1881, at the age of thirty-two, that its première at the [New Theatre](#) gave him his theatrical breakthrough. In his plays [The Father](#) (1887), [Miss Julie](#) (1888), and [Creditors](#) (1889), he created naturalistic dramas that – building on the established accomplishments of [Henrik Ibsen](#)'s prose [problem plays](#) while rejecting their use of the structure of the [well-made play](#) – responded to the call-to-arms of [Émile Zola](#)'s manifesto "Naturalism in the Theatre" (1881) and the example set by [André Antoine](#)'s newly established [Théâtre Libre](#) (opened 1887). In [Miss Julie](#), characterisation replaces plot as the predominant dramatic element (in contrast to [melodrama](#) and the well-made play) and the determining role of [heredity](#) and the [environment](#) on the "vacillating, disintegrated" characters is emphasized. Strindberg modeled his short-lived Scandinavian Experimental Theatre (1889) in [Copenhagen](#) on Antoine's theatre and he explored the theory of Naturalism in his essays "On Psychic Murder" (1887), "On Modern Drama and the Modern Theatre" (1889), and a preface to [Miss Julie](#), the last of which is probably the best-known statement of the principles of the theatrical movement.

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During the 1890s he spent significant time abroad engaged in scientific experiments and studies of the occult. A series of psychotic attacks between 1894 and 1896 (referred to as his "*Inferno* crisis") led to his hospitalization and return to Sweden. Under the influence of the ideas of [Emanuel Swedenborg](#), he resolved after his recovery to become "the Zola of the Occult". In 1898 he returned to play-writing with [To Damascus](#), which, like [The Great Highway](#) (1909), is a dream-play of spiritual pilgrimage. His [A Dream Play](#) (1902) – with its radical attempt to dramatize the workings of the [unconscious](#) by means of an abolition of conventional dramatic time and space and the splitting, doubling, merging, and multiplication of its characters – was an important precursor to both expressionism and surrealism. He also returned to writing historical drama, the genre with which he had begun his play-writing career. He helped to run the [Intimate Theatre](#) from 1907, a small-scale theatre, modeled on [Max Reinhardt's](#) *Kammerspielhaus*, that staged his [chamber plays](#) (such as [The Ghost Sonata](#)).

We Waves

WE, we waves,
That are rocking the winds
To rest—
Green cradles, we waves!

Wet are we, and salty;
Leap like flames of fire—
Wet flames are we:
Burning, extinguishing;
Cleansing, replenishing;
Bearing, engendering.

We, we waves,
That are rocking the winds
To rest!

Indra

DOWN to the sand-covered earth.
Straw from the harvested fields
soiled our feet;
Dust from the high-roads,
Smoke from the cities,
Foul-smelling breaths,
Fumes from cellars and kitchens,
All we endured.
Then to the open sea we fled,
Filling our lungs with air,
Shaking our wings,
And laving our feet.

Indra, Lord of the Heavens,
Hear us!
Hear our sighing!
Unclean is the earth;
Evil is life;
Neither good nor bad
Can men be deemed.
As they can, they live,
One day at a time.
Sons of dust, through dust they
journey;
Born out of dust, to dust they
return.
Given they were, for trudging,
Feet, not wings for flying.
Dusty they grow—
Lies the fault then with them,
Or with Thee?