

The logo consists of a red ribbon-like shape pointing downwards and to the right, containing the word "Hamsun" in white. Below it is a yellow ribbon-like shape pointing downwards and to the left, containing the year "2009" in white. The background of the page features a faint, large image of a pocket watch.

Hamsun

2009

Press kit

The National Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Birth of Knut Hamsun (1859-1952)

1 August in Lom/Vågå “Oh, Isak! Hamsun across Time”

3.00 p.m.: «Oh, Isak! Hamsun across Time»

Theatre production at Mefjellet, Sognefjellet
Free of charge, performance in Norwegian.

Press Contacts:

Hamsun 2009 Marte-Kine Sandengen 900 90 765 marte-kine.sandengen@nb.no

Artistic Director Hamsun 2009/The Norwegian Touring Company: Catrine Telle 913 88 303 ctelle@online.no

More Hamsun programme 1 August:

12a.m. –7 p.m.: «The Growth of the Soil» (*Markens grøde*) market day in the centre of Lom. Local food producers from Ottadalen and Gudbrandsdalen.

11.00 a.m.: Exhibition of paintings by Arne Sandervang in Lom Library. Exhibition to be opened by the Mayor of Lom.

12.00a.m.: Exhibition of paintings by Karl Erik Harr in Steinfjøset. Exhibition to be opened by Theatre Manager Ellen Horn.

7.30 p.m.: «Words and life. On Hamsun’s equivocacy in *Growth of the Soil*. A talk at Nordalsberget by Inge Eidsvåg, lecturer and author. Music by Kristin Kolden.

9.00 p.m.: The film *The Growth of the Soil* (Gunnar Sommerfeldt, 1921) will be shown at Lom Community Centre. Introduction by the Norwegian Film Institute (Norsk filminstitutt).

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Hamsun

2009

Oh, Isak! Hamsun across Time

A commemorative event marking the 150th anniversary of the birth of Knut Hamsun. Sognefjellet, 1 August at 3 p.m. (free of charge).

About fifty women dressed in yellow meet on a mountainside. Amongst them are actresses Ane Dahl Torp, Liv Bernhoft Osa and Marit Østbye. In the midst of the mountains, surrounded by choral works, crying children and city sounds, we meet “The Growth of the Soil” (*Markens grøde*) as seen through the eyes of five prominent contemporary Norwegian authors.

Herbjørg Wassmo, Gro Dahle, Maria Tryti Vennerød, Hanne Ørstavik and Vigdis Hjorth were invited to come with their response to the Nobel Prize-winning novel from the perspective of women writing in 2009. The result – love, sarcasm and reflection.

What are these women in the mountains singing about? Is it about the children who died? About Knut? Isak?

“It is Isak.

And his shoes make tracks across my skin.

His shoes walk along my veins.

His feet cross my heart

and continue beneath the great arboreal crowns of my children.”

(Excerpt from text by Gro Dahle.)

Enjoy the beautiful valley of Gudbrandsdalen, where Hamsun was born and where he live until he was three years old, and experience a magnificent encounter across time!

Hamsun

2009

Cast and Production Staff of *Oh, Isak!*

Actors: Ane Dahl Torp, Liv Bernhoft Osa and Marit Østbye

Women's Choir: Amateur singers

Violin: Marie Forr Klåpbakken

Director: Kjersti Horn

Composer/Sound Design: Erik Hedin

Choir Conductors: Hildegunn Hovde and Kristbjørn Rossehaug

Costume design: Marianne Sembsmoen

Make-up: Marianne Log

Production Manager: Alexander Konings

Producer: Beate Svenningsen

Artistic Director Hamsun 2009: Catrine Telle / The Norwegian Touring Company

Thanks to :

Oslo Nye Teater

Det Norske Teatret

Marianne Kjølstad

Lom og Bøverdalen Røde Kors Hjelpekorps

Kjell S. Stålevik

Ungdomshuset i Lom

About Knut Hamsun's novel *The Growth of the Soil*

In 1920 Hamsun was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for *The Growth of the Soil* – a paean to agriculture and the life of frontiersmen in novel form. The book is the epic tale of frontiersman Isak Sellanrå who sets off into the wilds and clears new land. Together with Inger, with the cleft lip, he builds a family and forges a viable existence based on what nature has to offer.

Isak Sellanrå is the realisation of the very essence of all cultivators of the soil. He is a man of all time, of all countries. His actions are based on absolute necessity, his work not only springing from elementary needs, but also touching the very mystery of life itself. In both thematic terms and in its construction, *The Growth of the Soil* represents the voice of nature itself.

Bård Hanem, Lom municipality

In the novel *The Growth of the Soil*, Knut Hamsun gave a highly memorable literary depiction of a reactionary utopia, an apologia for the earth, nature and agriculture at the dawn of the 20th century when industrialisation and urbanisation were putting traditional rural society under pressure. We meet the novel's lumbering backwoods heroes as outsiders in their time, yet fitting perfectly with the land. The author presents them as models for a time which has passed and simultaneously allows us to smile both at and with them as we witness their struggles and their inelegant courtship.

The reactionary aspects of Hamsun's beliefs can be studied from a political angle in his articles, letters and contributions to newspapers; in *The Growth of the Soil* we see him creating a dream of a society which had no future.

Per Thomas Andersen, professor, University of Oslo

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Hamsun

2009

Hamsun on film

A DVD Box Set containing six screen versions of Hamsun works will be released in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the birth of Knut Hamsun in 2009.

The films in the Box Set are: *The Growth of the Soil* (Gunnar Sommerfeldt, 1921), *Pan* (Henning Carlsen, 1995), *Wayfarers (Landstrykere*, Ola Solum, 1989), *Hunger (Sult*, Henning Carlsen, 1966), *Hamsun* (Jan Troell, 1996) and *The Telegraph Operator (Telegrafisten*, Erik Gustavson, 1993).

In all there are over 20 screen versions of Hamsun's works, ranging from the first films produced in Russia in 1916–17 to a new version of *Hunger* produced in the USA in 2001. Other productions include two biographical films and two documentaries, as well as a number of short films and TV productions.

The release of the DVD collection will be marked in Lom on Saturday 1 August with the screening of the silent film *The Growth of the Soil*. Both the film and the score of Leif Halvorsen's original music, composed for a symphony orchestra, were for many years assumed to be lost, but both have now been found. 88 years after the first screening, the film now exists in a format which bears great similarity to that of the original film in 1921.

The film has been restored by the Norwegian Film Institute and the National Library of Norway. A newly recorded version of the original music by the Norwegian Radio Orchestra (Kringkastingsorkesteret, KORK) has been added. The DVD Box Set is the result of a collaboration between the National Library of Norway, the Norwegian Film Institute and Nordisk Film Distribusjon AS, with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Film & Kino.

Hamsun 2009: Background and Organisation

The Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs (Kultur- og kirke departementet) wishes the anniversary of Knut Hamsun's birth to be commemorated in a manner commensurate with his standing as an internationally renowned author. The Ministry has given the National Library of Norway (Nasjonalbiblioteket) responsibility for organising the official commemorations in Norway in collaboration with relevant organisations and individuals.

This national commemorative project, led by the National Library, has been given the name *Hamsun 2009*. A Project Forum has been established, consisting of representatives of the municipalities of Hamarøy, Grimstad and Lom, the Hamsun Society (Hamsun-Selskapet), research groups and the National Library of Norway (Nasjonalbiblioteket). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Utenriksdepartementet) has observer status in the Project Forum.

The National Library has set up a collaboration with the National Touring Theatre of Norway (Riksteatret). Together with *Hamsun 2009* they are arranging four national commemorative events in Oslo, Lom, Hamarøy and Grimstad. In accordance with a request from the National Library, each individual Hamsun municipality has established a Planning Committee for the Hamsun events taking place both locally and regionally.

Organisations and individuals involved

The 150th anniversary of the birth of Knut Hamsun will be celebrated over the whole of Norway. Norwegian schools, academic groups, organisations, municipalities, counties and other parties wishing to contribute to the dissemination of information about Hamsun's life and works will initiate and implement activities independently, as well as collaborate on a variety of events.

The Hamsun anniversary will also be celebrated abroad. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for international cultural collaboration and the promotion of Norway abroad. The aim of promoting Hamsun internationally in 2009 is to raise the profile of his writings, as well as to generate interest in Hamsun in a variety of cultural contexts in different parts of the world. An additional objective is to promote modern Norway as a nation presenting and renewing a significant part of its cultural heritage.

The 150th Anniversary of 2009 – Four National Commemorative Events:

19 February – Oslo: «Hunger and Soup»

Arrogant, starving, proud, delirious, furious, in love, hopeful and poor. The commemorative event marking the opening of the Hamsun Anniversary Year 2009 was held on 19 February. The programme included extracts, scenes, dialogues and monologues from Knut Hamsun's modernist break-through novel *Hunger* (*Sult*, 1890). Director: Catrine Telle/The National Touring Company of Norway.

1 August – Lom/Vågå: «Oh Isak! Hamsun across Time»

In the midst of the mountains, surrounded by choral works, crying children and city sounds, we will meet "The Growth of the Soil" (*Markens grøde*) as seen through the eyes of five prominent contemporary Norwegian authors. Director: Kjersti Horn/The National Touring Theatre of Norway

4 August – Hamarøy: «Nothing to Dread» – a Gala Performance

The 150th anniversary of the birth of Knut Hamsun will be celebrated with the opening of the new Hamsun Centre at Hamarøy, the opening of the Hamsun Days and a stunning, action-packed performance with interpreters of Hamsun from the whole of Norway. August, Hamsun's eternal salesman from *Wayfarers* (*Landstrykere*) played by Per Kjerstad, unites the disparate elements. August may well have some offers which are not to be missed. Director: Catrine Telle/The National Touring Theatre of Norway

18 September – Grimstad: «On Overgrown Paths»

An old man struggles along overgrown paths in the stone quarry of Fjæreheia. He is hard of hearing and almost blind, but the extraordinary power of his language is still intact. Do not miss this poetic and melodious production about Knut Hamsun and the stillness and solitude of old age.

"On Overgrown Paths" is the last of four national commemorative events marking the 150th anniversary of Knut Hamsun's birth. The production is a collaboration between the Norwegian Touring Theatre and Agder Theatre, on behalf of the National Library of Norway. Director: Hilde Andersen. Actor: Lars Øyno.

For programme details, see hamsun.no

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Hamsun

2009

About the Website

The www.hamsun.no website is a central channel of communication for the Knut Hamsun Anniversary Year. Here one can find topical news and information about Hamsun events both at home and abroad. The “Ressurstorget” section on the website has an overview of lecturers, productions and other Hamsun-related resources, including postcards with Hamsun motifs which may be downloaded.

In addition, the website will provide information on Hamsun’s life and writings using materials from the National Library Collection (photographs, posters, manuscripts etc.), as well as information on research and new writing by contemporary authors.

The National Library is responsible for development and operation of the website (Editor: Gro Roksand). The site will continue to operate after the end of the Knut Hamsun Anniversary Year.

Hamsun 2009

The National Library of Norway (Nasjonalbiblioteket)

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Knut Hamsun's life and works

- 1859 Knut Hamsun was born as Knud Pedersen on 4 August in the valley of Gudbrandsdalen.
- 1862 Moved with his family to the village of Hamsund, Hamarøy in the county of Nordland.
- 1877 His first book, *Den Gaadefulde*, was published in Tromsø by Mikal Urdals forlag.
- 1886 Moved to Kristiania in the winter. Experienced hunger and destitution. He travelled to the USA in August, his second visit. Had various jobs, including work as a tram conductor in Chicago.
- 1887 Travelled to Minneapolis in the spring. Worked as a journalist and lecturer.
- 1888 Turned 29 in August, but from then on consistently referred to himself as being one year younger. The first chapters of *Hunger (Sult)* were printed anonymously in November in the Copenhagen journal *Ny jord*.
- 1890 In June, *Hunger* was published in book form under Hamsun's full name. Moved to Lillesand on the south coast of Norway where he wrote the short story "Smaabyliv" and "Fra det ubevidste Sjæleliv", a literary manifesto.
- 1892 *Mysteries (Mysterier)* was published in September.
- 1894 *Pan* was published in December.
- 1898 Married Bergljot Goepfert (née Bech) on 13 May. *Aftenrøde* was published in June and received its world premiere at Christiania Theater on 17 October (11 performances). *Victoria* was published in October.
- 1909 Hamsun married Marie Lavik (née Andersen) on 25 June. *A Wanderer plays on Muted Strings (En vandrør spiller med Sordin)* was published in November/December.
- 1911 *In the Grip of Life* was published in book form in January. Bought "Skogheim", a farm belonging to the local policeman at Hamarøy. Settled there as a writer and farmer together with Marie after the house had been renovated.
- 1917 Sold the "Skogheim" farm at Hamarøy and moved to Larvik. *The Growth of the Soil* was published.
- 1918 The Hamsun family moved to Nørholm near Grimstad.
- 1920 *The Women at the Pump (Konerne ved Vandposten)* was published. Received the Nobel Prize in Stockholm on 10 December for the novel *The Growth of the Soil*.
- 1927 *Wayfarers* was published in October.
- 1935 Attacked the imprisoned German pacifist and later Nobel Laureate Carl von

- Ossietský in an article entitled "Ossietský" which appeared in *Aftenposten* and *Tidens Tegn* on 22 November.
- 1940 Norway was invaded by German troops on 9 April. Hamsun wrote the article "Et Ord til os" at the outbreak of the war, as well as a number of other articles and appeals in support of the occupying forces.
- 1943 Hamsun sent his Nobel Prize Medal to Goebbels in June. Had a tempestuous meeting with Hitler in Berchtesgaden on 26 June, at which Hamsun put forward complaints about Terboven, the German Reichskommissar in Norway.
- 1945 Wrote an obituary for Adolf Hitler which appeared in *Aftenposten* on 7 May. After German armed forces had withdrawn from Norway, Knut and Marie Hamsun were held under house arrest at Nørholm. Later Hamsun was interned at Grimstad Hospital. Appeared before Sand Magistrate's Court in Grimstad on 23 June charged with Crimes against the State under § 86 and 140 of the Penal Code. Later transferred to the Psychiatric Clinic at Vinderen in Oslo where he was examined by Consultant Gabriel Langfeldt. Hamsun made notes for *On Overgrown Paths* (*Paa gjengrodde Stier*).
- 1946 Discharged from the Psychiatric Clinic after a harrowing stay. The psychiatric assessment concluded that Hamsun was of sound mind under the provisions of criminal law although his mental faculties were considered to be permanently impaired.
- 1947 Following the medico-legal psychiatric assessment the Director General of Public Prosecutions chose not to initiate criminal proceedings against Hamsun. The issue of whether he should be made financially accountable for his membership in Nasjonal Samling (NS) was passed to the Directorate for Compensation (Erstatningsdirektoratet). Legal proceedings in the compensation case took place at Sand Magistrate's Court in Grimstad on 16 December. Sentenced to pay NOK 425 000 as compensation for his NS membership. The sentence was passed on 19 December. In June 1948 the Supreme Court reduced the level of compensation to NOK 325 000.
- 1949– *On Overgrown Paths* was published on 28 September 1949. Lived a quiet life at
1952 Nørholm. Minimal sight and hearing.
- 1952 Knut Hamsun died in his bedroom at Nørholm on 19 February. He was buried at Nørholm.

More about Hamsun's life and works:

http://www.nb.no/hamsun2009/hamsuns_liv_og_verk

Hamsun's Calendar Pages

by Sigbjørn Grindheim, Research Librarian, the National Library

“I have always been in the habit of scribbling things down at night after a couple of hours' sleep, it's neither flesh nor fowl in the morning, just loose notes, I have no other drafts,” Hamsun wrote to his publisher Harald Grieg.

When Knut Hamsun wrote notes, he used any paper to hand. The unused reverse side of a sheet which had already been written on would serve, whatever was on the front. It might be one of his own manuscript sheets, letters or envelopes he had received, bills or both sides of used calendar pages. It was not unusual to use the latter, especially, as they had served their purpose. Writing paper was a scarce commodity in many homes in the 1800s and economizing on paper was not uncommon. Even today, for many people, not wasting paper is still a reflex action.



If the letters were in quarto format, Hamsun would tear them in two down the middle so that he had writing sheets in octavo format. The book manuscripts in the National Library are mostly in this format; the manuscript of *Rosa* has manuscripts of articles and letters on the reverse, for example. Parts of the *Siste Kapittel* were written on calendar pages, as was the draft of an article about Strindberg for his birthday in 1912, as well as notes and drafts of *August*. In the letter to his publisher Harald Grieg* mentioned above, Knut Hamsun writes about the manuscript of *The Ring is Closed*: “So you see I don't have a draft, so thank goodness you have a fireproof hole somewhere for the Mscpt.**”

Hamsun 2009 has incorporated the calendar pages as a design element in the 150th Anniversary Celebrations, and they will feature on banners, flyers, invitations and programs. Design by Anna Aune, Hei!

*The letter to the publisher Harald Grieg 23 May 1936 is reproduced in *Knut Hamsun som han var, Et utvalg av hans brev* by Tore Hamsun, Oslo 1956, p. 94-95, and subsequently in *Knut Hamsuns brev* by Harald S. Næss, but the owner of the original is unknown.

** Mscpt=manuscript