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2009

Press kit

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

4 August at Hamarøy

«Nothing to Dread»

A gala performance to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Knut Hamsun and the opening of the Hamsun Centre

5.00 p.m.: Official opening of the Hamsun Centre and the gala performance «Nothing to Dread»

A celebration of Knut Hamsun's birthday with the opening of the new Hamsun Centre at Hamarøy and a stunning, action-packed performance with interpreters of Hamsun from the whole of Norway. August, the eternal salesman from *The Wanderers* (*Landstrykere*), unites the disparate elements in his inimitable fashion. Director: Catrine Telle/The National Touring Theatre of Norway (Riksteatret).

The performance is free of charge, and in Norwegian.

HRH The Crown Princess Mette-Marit will attend the performance.

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Hamsun

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More Hamsun programme 4 August

11.00 a.m.–1.00 p.m.: Hamsund – Knut Hamsun's childhood home

- Champagne breakfast and laying of wreath at the bust of Hamsun
- Reading in the garden by Henny Moan

2.00 p.m.: By the bridge at Presteid

- Flotilla of traditional Nordland boats arrives at Presteid

9.00 p.m.: The Hamsun Centre

- Public festival and concert featuring DDE and Publiners
- Guided tours of the Hamsun Centre
- Film screening in the Hamsun Centre

The Hamsun Days 2009 (4–9 August). For programme, see www.hamsundagene.no

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A red ribbon-like graphic with the word "Hamsun" in white, slanted upwards to the right. Below it, a gold ribbon-like graphic with the year "2009" in white, slanted downwards to the right.

Hamsun

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«Nothing to Dread» – a Gala Performance

At last. After countless adversities spanning many years, the Hamsun Centre at Hamarøy will be officially opened on 4 August.

Over the last few months we have seen Steven Holl's fantastic building springing up and artists and performers from the whole of Northern Norway and beyond will be participating in the opening of the Centre on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Knut Hamsun.

We will also be hearing from Hamsun himself. Indeed we are spoiled for choice – his writings are extensive and as vibrant as ever.

August, Hamsun's eternal salesman, will be guiding us through this summer's day. His ingenuity knows no bounds and he is full of good suggestions and ideas for improvements for the region, the county and – not least – for the new Centre itself. August is firmly of the opinion that things could go very wrong indeed unless he is at hand to guide us safely into the future.

Cast and Production Staff of «Nothing to Dread»:

Director: Catrine Telle/The National Touring Theatre of Norway (Riksteatret)

Script (August): Jesper Halle

Taking part:

Per Kjerstad, Marianne Meløy, Mari Boine, Juni Dahr, Therese Einmo Jürgensen, Kristin Holand, Thor-Inge Gullvåg, Per Arne Løset, Gisle Hass, Taro Vestøl Cooper, Mine Nilay Yalcin, Sissel Helgesen, Øystein Sanne, Maria Shustrova, Georg Buljo, Gunnar Augland and Salten Mannskor

Musicians from MiNensemblet:

Inge Rolland (flute), Ole Kristoffersen (clarinet), Jonathan Williams (horn), Grant McKay (bassoon), Joel Larsson (double bass)

Stage Designer: Kenneth Kolberg

Head of Wardrobe: Marianne Sembsmoen

Producers: Beate Svenningsen and Grethe Henden/The National Touring Theatre of Norway

Thanks to:

- Nordland Teater / Reidar Sørensen / Musikk i Nordland / Håkon Berge
- Figurteatret i Nordland / Preben Faye-Schjøll / TinkerTing Pickled Image / Dik Downey & Vicky Andrews
- Åarjelhsaemien Teatere – Sørsamisk Teater / Ada Einmo Jürgensen
- Teater NOR / Thorbjørn Gabrielsen

Parts of the performance have received financial support from Arts Council Norway (Norsk kulturråd), Fritt Ord, Fund for Performing Artists (Fond for utøvende kunstnere) and Nordland County.

About *Wayfarers (Landstrykere)*

Wayfarers, published in 1927, is the first novel in Knut Hamsun's warm-hearted, popular, epic and episodic August Trilogy. The action takes place in the county of Nordland and is mainly concerned with the relationship between Edevart from Polden and his good friend August – a wayfarer, adventurer and conman. Even though the unhappy love affair between dependable Edevart and Lovise Margrete Doppen plays an important role in *Wayfarers*, it is August who is the main character. He calls himself a circumnavigator of the globe and is an unsystematic but endless source of business ideas, lies and stories. He sees opportunities where others see natural barriers. He drains marshes, speculates in shares and builds quays in an effort to get the large commercial ships to call. All the while, the question of where August really comes from and where he is going continues to be veiled in mystery.

August is more concerned with speculating than with profit, more concerned with the journey than with the destination. What makes him such a fascinating figure is, in part, the fact that August embraces in his own distinctive fashion both traditional rural and wayfaring culture and the modern culture of commerce. Indeed, the story about August is also the story of the development of modern Norway, a story which interweaves cynicism and innocence, stupidity and wisdom and the most disquieting misanthropy with an all-embracing love of mankind.

The August Trilogy continues in *August* (1930) and *The Road Leads On (Men Livet lever, 1933)*.

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 1920 Knut Hamsun was awarded the Nobel Prize for his novel *The Growth of the Soil (Markens grøde)*. The novel is perhaps Hamsun's most widely read, most loved and yet also most hated work. It has been called a national treasure, Hamsun's homage to nature and children of nature, but has also been highlighted as an example of Hamsun's reactionary views on women and society.

On 1 August, 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 Kapitel* 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