



## An Enemy of the People

*Henrik Ibsen (1828 - 1906)*

Read by:	Multiple readers	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	2 hours 57 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1266
Language:	English	UPC:	0701236969863
Style:	Dramatic reading	MSLP:	\$9.99
Genre:	Drama		

The term “enemy of the people” may have first emerged in the 1882 play *An Enemy of the People*, written by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen in response to the public outcry that greeted his play *Ghosts*. Both the play and author were called scandalous, degenerate and immoral for daring to have an open discussion of sex outside of marriage and of syphilis. The play’s action centers on the discovery that a town’s public baths have been contaminated by syphilis. Dr. Thomas Stockmann, the protagonist and the medical officer at the baths, argues that the town be notified immediately by the town paper. The mayor, his older brother Peter, wants to lay low and handle it differ-

ently. The editor of the paper at first agrees with the doctor, and then has a change of heart, fearing damage to the town’s economy. Unbowed, the doctor calls a town meeting, at which he castigates the authorities and the cowardice of the majority of the public. Insulted and enraged, the townspeople shout repeatedly that “he is an enemy of the people”. They further react by smashing his windows, firing his schoolteacher daughter, disinheriting his wife, and evicting them from their house. Apart from its title, the play remains highly relevant today for its consideration of environmental issues, irresponsible authorities, and the moral dilemmas and perils of whistle-blowing.

**Henrik Ibsen** (March 20, 1828 – May 23, 1906) is widely regarded as the most important playwright since William Shakespeare. His best known works include *A Doll’s House*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts*, *Peer Gynt*, *The Wild Duck* and *An Enemy of the People*, and he is the most frequently performed dramatist after Shakespeare. He is often called “the father of realism” and is one of the founders of Modernism in the theatre. He was born into a well-connected merchant family in the seaport town of Skien, Norway that experienced serious financial difficulties when he was a young boy. Much of his work is shaped by the dark secrets and moral conflicts of families keeping up appearances, with a particular focus on the suffering of women. He left school at age 15, apprenticed as a pharmacist for a time, fathered an illegitimate child, and moved to Oslo, where he tried unsuccessfully to enter the university. He began writing plays in his early 20’s, moving to Bergen, where he became deeply involved in all aspects of the theatre and began to write, achieving recognition with *Brand* in 1865 and *Peer Gynt* in 1868. He left Norway in 1864 and spent 27 years in Italy and Germany during his most productive years, returning to Norway in 1891. As he matured his work generated considerable controversy for its exposure of hypocritical social values, but he went beyond these concerns in his late period with more complex and introspective works. He was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature in 1902, 1903, and 1904.