

Tell Tale Theatre 2018-2019 Season

Main Stage Shows:

The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe

The fifth and final play of the season is *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Edgar Allan Poe was the main inspiration for the creation of this horror thriller. It is fitting that the Tell Tale Theatre presents his works once every season in dedication for the mystery author. The story involves the narrator convincing the reader of his sanity. The narrator describes a murder he committed. He killed an old man who has a vulture-eye according to the narrator. The murder is slowly planned, and one night he kills the old man in his sleep. He then dismembers the body and hides it under the floorboards. At the end the narrator starts to hear the old man's heart beat. The guilt grows in him and he confesses to the murder and reveals the dead body.

This theatre takes places at the Heathman Hotel, which is known to have some haunted rooms. I think this play should be a live interactive theatre, where the audience is taken to different rooms through the hotel to watch the story unfold. It is fitting that the set is in a bedroom. The audience does watch the narrator commit the act, and throughout the piece the narrator is constantly talking directly to the audience to convince them he is not crazy. The most important part of this show is the sound of the heartbeat. I want that noise to surround and consume the actor and the audience, where it almost become unbearable. I would like Bill Buckhurst to be the director for this interactive piece. He recently directed the off-Broadway production of *Sweeny Todd*, where it took place in a pie shop and the audience was on the set. He will be able to use the unconventional space to create an immersive world for the audience that is participating.

The Woman in Black by Susan Hill and Stephen Mallatratt

The third show in the season is going back to ghost stories. The play is a play within a play, where old Arthur Kipps is telling the story to an actor. The actor becomes the young Arthur, and the older actor is playing several characters. Arthur Kipps is a lawyer who has to work on the paperwork on a widow who passed. After speaking with the villagers and experiencing feelings in the house, Arthur believes there is a presence there, the Woman in

Black. He discovers the woman was riding a carriage with her child and they got trapped in a fog. The child passed away, and the woman, grief stricken, contracted a disease and died. The Woman in Black wants others to suffer as she has. At the end of the play, the actor asks the old Arthur about the actress playing the Woman in Black. The old Arthur denies anyone else was in the theatre with them, implying the real Woman in Black is there. The play ends with a rocking chair moving to show her presence is there.

This play takes place in a theatre, and I want the audience to really feel like they are on the set. The stage will be a 3/4 thrust, as this will allow easy access for the actors to move around. The crew is crucial in this scene, as I want to create the sense that someone is over the audience's shoulders. For example, having a gust of wind blow from the back, having the curtains on the side move every now and then, and most importantly having the chair move. I also want the space to feel a little old, for example have a flickering light. I want the space to feel comfortable when the audience walks in, and the space to look welcoming, so when the show starts, the uneasy feeling can slowly come in. I would like Katie Mitchell to direct this piece. She has been described by her intensity of emotions and creating a very distinctive world. The play needs to at first seem like two normal people talking to each other, which later expands into a strange world, which happens to come to life at the end. I believe Katie Mitchell can accomplish this.

Cuddles by Joseph Wilde

The second show in the season involves a very small cast of just two females. This story steps away from the paranormal to a dark fantasy story. It is not outright scary, but the content is intended to have the audience's spine curl. The story involves Eve, who is a vampire and is living in the house of her parents. Her domineering sister, Tabby, takes care of her. The attic is very dingy and is not an ideal place to live. Once Tabby starts to go out into the outside world more, Eve is struggling with the lack of attention and her blood lust continues to grow. There is a very strong power struggle in this relationship.

I want to create an atmosphere of isolation as Eve and Tabby live in something that the outside world does not know of or understand. Eve also starts out this play with story time, so I want the seating to be a traditional proscenium. The set is very simple. I want the play to be stark and gritty. I would like Sophia Lillis to play the character Eve. She is brand new to the

entertainment industry and her main credit is in IT, as a girl struggling with becoming a woman and with her sexually abusive father. I would like to have Rebecca Taichman as the director of this piece. She has a wide range of works including *Indecent*. I believe she will be able to really go into character development for this piece.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Thomas Russell Sullivan

The fourth play in the season is classic gothic thriller story. The story is about a respected doctor and his split personality who is a criminal who commits horrid acts of murder. Hyde kills the father of Jekyll's fiancé, and his friend finds out that Dr. Jekyll and Hyde are the same person. Jekyll creates a potion that allows him to control the switch between the two personalities. When Jekyll runs out of the potion, he is trapped as Hyde and at the end commits suicide.

I enjoy this piece because it is a psychological thriller. It has very dark undertones without being too scary. Since this play was written in 1887, and in public domain, it is open to changes if necessary. I would like this space to be in the round, so it gives the character Jekyll a sense of being trapped. I would like Hyde to move around the audience, to show he will always have more control and more freedom than Jekyll who is stuck and trying to escape from himself. I would like Pam MacKinnon to direct this play. She directed *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* I believe she can use similar themes such as the mixing of reality and fantasy for Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Underground by Michael Sloane

This is a thriller play that takes place in an underground train carriage in London. Twelve people become trapped in the train, and emotions rise and more people start to feel claustrophobic and the possibility of getting out becomes slimmer. During an electrical shortage that occurs, someone is found murdered. Reality hits the rest of the people aboard that there is a murderer also trapped on this train and nowhere to go.

I would like this play to be done in the Shanghai tunnels. The tunnels were originally built to transport goods around the city. It eventually became known for gambling and then white slavery. The jail cells are still around, and the space could be haunted. I believe this location would give a more realistic feeling of being trapped for the actors and the audience. I would first

like the audience to be given a tour of the tunnels with the actors to really immerse themselves in the space and learn the history of the tunnel. Afterwards, they would all sit down and watch the show.

Side Initiatives:

Grimms' Fairy Tales readings

These readings will consist of five fairy tales/folklore written by the Grimm brothers. The subject matters are dark and twisted, and I think these readings will be a nice change from the plays in the mainstage series. How the audience feels or reacts after the readings depend on the delivery of the actor. The five stories for this season are *Rapunzel*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Rumpelstiltskin*.

I want these readings to have a similar atmosphere to scary campfire stories. The actors or those reading the stories will have one slight shine on them from below to simulate as if they were holding a flashlight under their chins for spooky effect. The stage will be very simple. I want the audience to feel very comfortable, so I want the layout to be cabaret seating with mismatching chairs.

Nightmare Before Christmas in Concert

Most theatres like to include a holiday story in November and December, and I wanted the Tell Tale to also include a festive story. My main stage season consists of all plays, so I wanted to branch out from that. As my second initiative, the Tell Tale Theatre will be doing a screening on the *Nightmare before Christmas* with a live orchestra playing the music.

Most of my season may not be suitable for children, so I believe this will be more inclusive to families while staying relevant to the genre. The live orchestra will help immerse the audience into the story. The orchestra playing the music will be the Oregon Symphony that is based in Portland, Oregon. I believe this will be a great opportunity for the two companies to work together and create art in the Portland community. The symphony will also help establish the Tell Tale Theatre as being part of Portland's identity.