

## **The Woman in Black - watch it if you dare**

November 3, 2024

That Theatre Company presents the intense ghost story *The Woman in Black*, which uses all the tools of the horror genre to create a genuinely scary show with outstanding performances.

*'Performance is an art acquired with time and tears'.*

The tone is light in That Theatre Company's *The Woman in Black*. Light with an undertone of horror and mystery. Cole Porter's notes ring out as two men take turns on stage and try their hand at the art of acting. A story must be told. It is the older man's story. It must not be forgotten, but he is not a great storyteller. The younger man is, so before long he takes over the role of narrator instead of directing the other as originally agreed.

### **She lurks in the shadows**

That Theatre Company has staged fifty productions since 1997, and this is the fourth time *The Woman in Black* has been staged, the last three with Barry McKenna as director. This is understandable, as the 1987 ghost story offers great performances and horror in the Gothic-British tradition of Edgar Allen Poe. Ian Burns is the elderly Arthur Kipps, who as a young man went to Eel Marsh House to clean up after the recently deceased Mrs Drablow. There he encountered the ghost known as *The Woman in Black*, who has haunted him ever since and cost him dearly. Now he will attempt to exorcise her by reliving the events of that time as a story.

The plot builds traditionally and effectively as the actor plays young Kipp's experiences in the lonely house in the marshes, piecing together his various finds into a heartbreaking story of lost children and family tragedy. And lurking in the shadows is she, the black woman who carries her horrific grief with shocking effect.

### **Sparkling interplay**

Sound and light are key players in the horror universe. *We create the environment with 'recorded sounds'*, as the actor says to Kipps. From the streets of London to the overturned horse-drawn carriage in the marsh fog and the abandoned children's room with the rocking chair behind the bobbinette, sounds creep into our nervous system, destabilise perception and make us gasp slightly in our seats when *The Woman in Black* peeks out in Julian Simpson's effective, diffuse lighting.

Benjamin Stender is the slightly affected actor who amusingly flirts with his profession, but is soon caught up in the story's irregularities and the metal layer that traditionally gives the narrative and the phrase *'time and tears'* another jarring twist. Ian Burns shines in seven roles, from the gnarled yet hopeful elderly Kipps to the affable Sam Daily and the taciturn coachman Keckwick. The interplay sparkles in Barry McKenna's traditional, dynamic direction, which has a special eye for gesture.

*The Woman in Black* is a good choice as an anniversary production for a company that for almost three decades has presented the British tradition at a high level in Denmark. This year with a ghost

story that utilises all the elements of the genre in a genuinely creepy production with excellent performances in an elegant setting.

Screenplay: Susan Hill and Stephen Mallatratt. Director: Barry McKenna. Sound: Mark Jones.

Lighting: Julian Simpson.

Cast: Ian Burns, Benjamin Stender and Mikka Deleuran.

The Woman in Black plays 30 October - 23 November 2024 in Krudttønden.

<https://teaterbilletter.dk/forestillinger/woman-in-black-123123>

Kr.50.00 – Kr.235,00