

Shadowland

Shadowland Wraps Up Season with "The Woman in Black"

Following on the heels of "The Devil's Music," starring Miché Braden as Bessie Smith until Sunday, September 4th, **Shadowland Theatre's** next opening night, the last in its record-breaking 2005 season, will introduce "The Woman in Black," the audience-friendly ghost story currently the second-longest running show in London's West End.

Adapted by the late Stephen Mallatratt from the book by Susan Hill, "The Woman in Black" treads in the footsteps of the classic ghost story, following the tradition of Charles Dickens, M.R James, Henry James, and Edith Wharton. It is not a horror story or a tale of terror, yet the events build up to a horrifying climax and instills a sense of horror. It relies on atmosphere, a vivid sense of place, on hints and glimpses and suggestions, on what is shadowy, heard and sometimes only half-seen, to chill the reader's blood to the marrow and make reading the book alone at night inadvisable for the faint-hearted.

"From childhood, I had loved ghost stories... the classic, English ghost story especially, full of atmosphere," says Susan Hill. "These frighten by stealth, as it were; they are not tales of horror or terror, they're not thrillers, they don't have vampires and werewolves."

Stephen Mallatratt's adaptation for the stage remains entirely true to the book itself and uses much of Susan Hill's own descriptive writing and dialogue, while transforming the novel into a totally gripping piece of theatre.

According to Brendan Burke, **Shadowland's** artistic director, this is a terrifying tale told in a very simple and a very scary way, ideal for a lead up to Halloween. "When I first read the play, I loved the plot's twists and turns. And after the 21 completely sold-out performances in a row – from the end of *Stones in His Pockets*, all of *All My Sons*, and the opening night of *The Devil's Music*, what a fantastic way to end our season."

Eel Marsh House stands tall, gaunt and isolated, surveying the endless flat salt marshes beyond the Nine Lives Causeway, somewhere on England's bleak East Coast. Here Mrs. Alice Drablow lived (and died) alone. Young Arthur Kipps, a junior solicitor, is ordered by his firm's senior partner to travel up from London to attend her funeral and then sort out all her papers. His task is a lonely one, and at first Kipps is quite unaware of the tragic secrets that lie behind the house's shuttered windows. He only has a terrible sense of unease. And then, he glimpses a young woman with a wasted face, dressed all in black, at the back of the church during Mrs. Drablow's funeral, and later, in the graveyard to one side of Eel Marsh House. Who is she? Why is she there? He asks questions, but the locals not only cannot or will not give him answers, they refuse to talk about the woman in black, or even to acknowledge her existence at all. So, Arthur Kipps has to wait until he sees her again, and she slowly reveals her identity to him – and her terrible purpose.

"The Woman in Black" is being co-produced by *Fleming Realty* and *Raad Graphic Arts*, now part of *CS Raad*.

Tickets are available by calling the **Shadowland Theatre** box office at 647-5511. For group sales of 10 or more, ask for Alyssa Tullin, assistant managing director.



From July 18-22, the lobby of the **Shadowland Theatre** was taken over by nine aspiring performers between the ages of 5 and 10 in Ellenville's first performing arts camp *Sing! Dance! Play! In Summer*.

Director Katie Taylor, her assistants Katrina Kass and Rachel Lefberg, and local artists gave the campers a first-hand introduction to all aspects of theater production. The kids wrote their own play, made their own costumes and props, learned a hip-hop dance, a song with descant, and even created their own Kidsbill.

Special thanks to Holly Budd for her help in designing the costumes and props; Tawanna Younger for her choreography; *Thorton Hardware* for donating the "drums"; and Alex Ritz for drumming lessons (*photo above, by David Winograd*). The week ended with a lobby production of "King Arthur and the Women in Black" performed by the group to a sold-out house of family and friends. 

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