

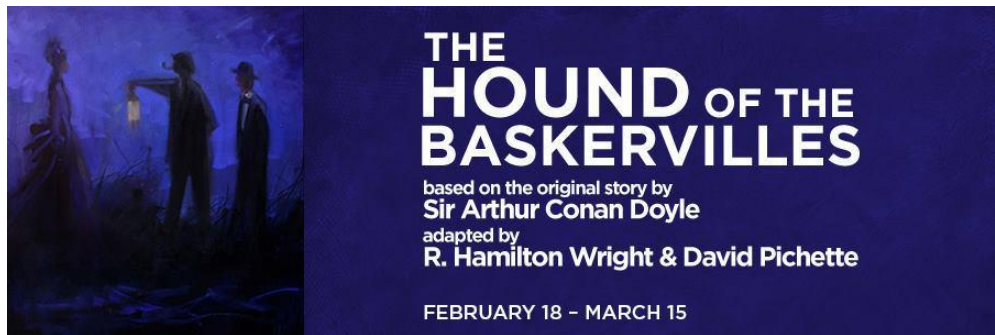
A Seat on the Aisle

an Indianapolis theatre blog by Ken Klingenmeier

“The Hound of the Baskervilles” at Indiana Repertory Theatre

February 21, 2015

seatontheaisle IRT, theatre review [Leave a comment](#)



Only recently have I become a Sherlock Holmes fan – due mostly to the fine and modern British television series – *Sherlock*, that is shown on PBS, and which stars Benedict Cumberbatch as the detective and Martin Freeman as John Watson. The books, frankly, have never caught my fancy, nor have the old films with Basil Rathbone in the title role. But I find the newer presentations to be quite engaging.

Such it was with IRT’s opening night presentation of one of the most famous of the Holmes stories, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Based on the original by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (of course), this offering is an enhanced adaptation by R. Hamilton Wright and David Pichette, who do an admirable job with it. (This version had its world premiere during the 2013-14 season at Seattle Repertory Theatre.) Presented in three short acts, the action was especially well presented by the extraordinary IRT technical staff. The story takes place in numerous varied locales, including Holmes’ rooms, train stations, and impressive Victorian homes, as well as outdoor settings. With immense sliding walls, drop down set pieces and tables that come up through the floor, the many set changes are quick and well devised.

The cast of nine is directed with an expert hand by Paul Amster, who in recent years directed IRT’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Game’s Afoot*, (the latter of which receives a brief tribute in this production). As Mr. Amster has proven before, his director’s eye sees all things onstage. Every detail of his production seems to be assembled with great care and aplomb.



Dr. John Watson (Matthew Brumlow) confers with the great Sherlock Holmes (Marcus Truschinski) in IRT's "The Hound of the Baskervilles"

Amster's cast is an impressive collection of talent. Marcus Truschinski, in his IRT debut, takes on the iconic role of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, and does a fine job with him. It's somewhat a credit to the script that Holmes is humorous and a touch ridiculous at times, and Truschinski manages to take on those qualities and add his own polish to the man. He is at once the remarkably observant, sharp-minded detective while just enough flawed attributes shine through. Matthew Brumlow brings the good Dr. Watson to life. Being Holmes' steady sidekick, Watson must rely on his own forgiving qualities to stay alongside the great man. Brumlow plays it thusly and somehow reminded me of Martin Freeman's portrayal, although I don't believe he was copying that actor in any way. Both of their Watsons have a certain upstanding nature that strongly shows through and is spot-on.



Sir Henry Baskerville (Eric Parks) catches the eye of Beryl Stapleton (Cristina Panfilio) in IRT's "The Hound of the Baskervilles"

The remaining cast features Mark Goetzinger in several interesting characterizations, none as forthright as old Mr. Frankland – who is one of the suspects. Constance Macy is well cast as Holmes' Mrs. Hudson and as Mrs. Barrymore – the latter being another of the suspicious ones. Robert Neal is solid as the manservant, Barrymore, while Ryan Artzberger does fine work in two widely varying roles as Dr. Mortimer, and an escaped murderer named only Selden. Will Mobley and Cristina Panfilio team up as brother/sister (and other things). They both make the most of their juicy roles and I believe I know what fun they must have had with the various nuances required to play them. Last but not least, Eric Parks appears as Sir Henry Baskerville, heir to Baskerville Hall. Parks does a noteworthy job creating a character who just cannot fit in with his new surroundings.



From left: Will Mobley, Marcus Truschinski, Mark Goetzinger, Cristina Panfilio and Ryan Artzberger do a scene from IRT's "The Hound of the Baskervilles"

All the aforementioned first-rate technical elements are created by the following team: Kevin Depinet, whose Scenic Design is of a striking scale; Tracy Dorman, whose Costume Designs are beautifully rendered and proper for this era; **Thomas C. Hase, whose Lighting Design superbly enhances the mood, the occasion, and the many locales in the play;** and Gregg Coffin, whose Incidental Music compositions set just the right spell upon us; as does the impressively arresting Sound Design by Todd Mack Reischman.

This Holmes tale is an immense and ambitious production, which results in a satisfying evening of mystery laced with moments of terror, yet balanced by just a touch of light-hearted humor. I enjoyed it completely.

The Hound of the Baskervilles will continue on the OneAmerica stage at IRT through March 15. Ticket information can be found by going online at <http://www.irtlive.com> or by calling the IRT box office at 317-635-5252.

* – Photos by Zach Rosing