

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
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Robert Louis Stevenson conceived "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" as a simple morality tale: We all have good and evil in us, and when Dr. Jekyll unleashes his inner Jack the Ripper, all hell breaks loose and Jekyll is helpless to contain it. Jeffrey Hatcher's adaptation for the stage adds more layers to this premise, some of which are illuminating, some are confusing, and some are just downright silly. The Rep's production of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* traverses fraught paths between symbolism and reality, drama and melodrama, horror and humor. For the most part, it succeeds as entertainment, but finally falls short in its reach for greater depth and complexity.

Dr. Henry Jekyll's (Anthony Marble) friends are concerned about him. He is behaving oddly, and no one seems to know why. Jekyll is, as most seeing the play already know, experimenting on himself to study the nature of evil. He does believe he is performing a kind of public service, that isolating the id is for the "greater good." He talks about the multifaceted brain, the different ways humans feel because of multiple stimuli (hence his alter egos, plural) "before man invented morality to harness our bestial instincts but not kill them. . . If he had, there would be no empire." To talk about bifurcation (Stevenson's central concept) is to "risk oversimplification."

In some ways, the traditional tropes of the story are all here: Dr. Jekyll discovers a compound that allows him to morph into the amoral Mr. Hyde and then come back to himself. It causes him great physical pain to make the change. And while Jekyll is an upstanding Victorian gentleman, Hyde is played some of the time as a hunched over, snarling beast who kills anyone who gets in his way and many who don't, such as the hapless prostitutes he patronizes.

There is overt symbolism (the cane, both intact and broken, and the names "Jekyll" and "Hyde" chief among them). Four actors personify Hyde: Scott Schafer, Anderson Matthews, Kyle Fabel and Bernadette Quigley. All the actors except Marble and Katie Fabel as Elizabeth play more than one role as those surrounding Jekyll. Most notable among them are Schafer as the odious Sir Danvers Carew, "the pornographer of death," who makes tasteless jokes to a class during a post-mortem examination and Fabel's Dr. H. K. Lanyon, from whom Jekyll seeks advice about his imaginary patient, "Edward Hyde."

Director Ed Stern writes in his notes that the simple good v. evil conflict of the original tale renders a predictable result lacking real drama. Yet, Hatcher's fragmented approach renders a confusing result lacking real coherence. There is an effective scene where Jekyll is tormented by all the Hydes at one time which seems to indicate that he is schizophrenic, but instead of using his voices to, say, crown a Dauphin, he succumbs to their lure to the dark side. At one point, he thinks he has it licked: "I can quit anytime I want to," the mantra of the addict. Jekyll himself lacks a personal life, but Hatcher has