

added a girlfriend for Hyde, Elizabeth, to the story. And he protects her instead of killing her. She loves him, either despite or because he's a bad boy.

When Hyde shows more humanity (he "hides" less), he becomes as much to be pitied as to be feared, and that upsets the balance, as far as I'm concerned. Ultimately, I became less intrigued than annoyed. No one who is involved in this production is at fault. The actors are excellent except Bernadette Quigley seems a bit silly as Poole, Jekyll's butler. It's fine to use gender neutral casting and it's especially fine to make part of Hyde's dark side the female, but she sounds and looks strange with her artificially deepened voice and gliding gait. Matthews has the coolest "Hyde" voice; he sounds old-movie scary with his plummy tones magnified down to the lower depths. But his character almost seems to be in a different play than the others, also because he is playing the part as an old-fashioned horror guy. Ultimately, it's not just Jekyll who is schizophrenic then, but also the play.

The set design (Robert Mark Morgan), costumes (Elizabeth Covey) and especially the lights by Thomas C. Hase are spectacular. The deceptively simple two-level stage is based on a system of rectangular recesses in the back wall with a curved staircase and a red door. The space only hints at the many locations by adding or removing a piece of furniture or two. The plain (generally) gray costumes by Elizabeth Covey both attract and deflect attention, plus they serve to unite Jekyll with his "Other(s)," But those lights, oh my! The stage is bathed in red when evil is afoot. During a conversation involving Jekyll and his colleagues in which all seems well, they are awash in golden lights. Outdoor scenes are enhanced by foggy spots. There's not a light cue missed that I could tell.

To make the play more atmospheric, the characters are miked, and the sound seems tinkered with more than usual. The Hyde characters are amplified when talking to Jekyll who is projected normally most of the time. Depending on the scene, the volume, pitch and timbre of the voices are manipulated. It is a little distracting, but also clever enough in giving a sense of the cacophony in the mind that leads to madness.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a mostly worthy attempt at a modern, perhaps even postmodern, rendition of Stevenson's strange case, and if anything were ever open to individual interpretation, this show is. Ultimately Jekyll remains misguided almost to the end in believing that "sin is nothing but weakness" for far too long. You can think about the issues yourself, or you can just sit back and try not to think too much at all while enjoying the visual riches the show provides.