

British Theatre Guide

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2:22: A Ghost Story

Danny Robins

Runaway Entertainment

Theatre Royal Bath

1–9 September 2023

A hit on the West End for some time now, with productions on four continents and a wheelbarrow-load of awards, *2:22: A Ghost Story* has enjoyed a hell of a post-pandemic run. Now Danny Robins's take on the ghost story genre embarks on a nationwide tour in a bid for more jumps and scares.

2:22: A Ghost Story has revelled in its cast announcements since it premièred in 2021. The play's wide appeal has attracted a plethora of names which are definitely household-worthy with an eclectic mix of once pop stars, stage debutants such as Lily Allen and Cheryl (just the mononymous first name now). Tom Felton of Slytherin fame and *Inbetweeners*' James Buckley have also taken on one of the four roles during its time in London.

Picked up for the tour are some more familiar faces in *Eastenders*' Louisa Lytton, Nathaniel Curtis (*It's A Sin*), Joe Absolom (who recently starred in [The Shawshank Redemption](#) at Theatre Royal Bath) and Charlene Boyd (*Mayflies*).

Robins's fascination with those we imagine (or see, depending on your viewpoint) has been long-standing. It can be felt throughout as they dive into those debates between the believers and non-believers. This theme is explored not just through the belief of ghosts but spirituality and religion.

2:22: A Ghost Story brings us into the world of new mother Jenny (Lytton), her husband Sam (Curtis), an old friend in Lauren (Boyd) and her new partner Ben (Absolom). After some unexplained events take place while Sam is away on a work trip, a few more occur on Sam's return with Lauren and Ben invited around for dinner. Can the stubborn scientist Sam be convinced of paranormal activity or will he be proven right in there being no such things as ghosts?

The character of Jenny is neatly written with plenty of depth and empathy, and it is quite easy to lean into her side of events. Of course, this is aided by Lytton's wonderful portrayal in which she laps it all up as the frenetic, ghost-disturbed new mother. She finds the sweet point between overplaying and disturbed. Absolom is likewise terrific as spiritual Ben in his delivery on sharp one-liners and bitterness towards Sam.

Two-time Olivier winner Anna Fleischle's ([Home, I'm Darling](#)) outstanding set design—a replica of that used in its London performances and elsewhere—uses every inch of the Theatre Royal Bath stage and leaves no stone unturned. It nails the brief of that heavy-handed, *Grand Designs* approach of renovation and plays wonderfully for the story.

Is it truly scary? Well, no. But horror is entirely subjective and one man's jump is another man's chuckle. At a rapid pace, it rallies through its two-hour runtime. Above all, with Matthew Dunster's astute direction, Robins's play is a pure crowd-pleaser.

Reviewer: [Jacob Newbury](#)