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The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde

James Hyland

Brother Wolf Productions

Sudbury Quay Theatre

17 January 2020

Based on the well-known novella by Robert Louis Stevenson, this is a one-man tour-de-force that will leave you breathless, stirred and shaken but at the same time probably feeling like you have witnessed one of the best monologue performances on stage for some time.

We all know the story of *Jekyll & Hyde*—in fact the phrase is part of our culture to describe a person who is unpredictable in character. Stevenson had a fascination for personality extremes and wrote this short story based on a couple of high profile murder cases of his day, one of which involved a personal friend. But how do you stage a plot that involves major physical transformation and gory murder with only one actor and a lectern?

The book is narrated by Jekyll's friend Utterson, but James Hyland makes Dr Jekyll himself narrator and sets the play in a lecture hall where we the audience are the scientists come to put his theories to the test.

Dr Jekyll starts by describing his fascination with the idea of a split personality—where one human being can be both good and evil—and his experiments to prove that this can happen using a vial of potion he has prepared. As the lecture progresses, we see him literally transform before our eyes as he recounts the exploits of his alter ego Hyde, linking him to the mysterious Jack the Ripper as he goes about his depraved deeds. But what will happen when Jekyll actually drinks the potion during the lecture as he threatens to do?

This is an incredible performance by an actor at the top of his game. Drawing us in from the start, Hyland is totally believable both as the doctor and his evil twin, layering his performance alternately with tension and horror yet at no time changing costume or having any other prop than the lectern which becomes in turn a bench, a body and a table. Hyland also plays other characters in the story including two prostitutes that are murdered, a boy that Hyde maims and the skeptical head of the scientific institute.

Absorbing, atmospheric and terrifying, this is a raw, visceral retelling that doesn't spare details of the gruesome mutilations or the vile thoughts behind Hyde's actions. By the end, we were all on the edge of our seats wondering what would happen.

This is an incredible performance, not for the faint-hearted but well worth seeing if you can catch it on tour.

Reviewer: [Suzanne Hawkes](#)