

College Theatre
Presents

Dracula

Adapted by
Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston
From
Bram Stoker's Victorian Novel

Directed by Amelia Barrett

Characters

Miss Wells, *the maid*
Jonathon Harker
Dr. Seward
Abraham Van Helsing

R.M. Renfield, *a patient*
Butterworth, *the attendant*
Lucy Seward
Count Dracula

Setting

Act I: Library in Dr. Seward's Sanatorium, Purley, England. Evening.

Act II: The same, evening, the following day.

Intermission

Act III, Scene I: The same, thirty-two hours later, shortly before sunrise.

Act III, Scene II: A vault. Just after sunrise.

Time

Spring, 1933

Synopsis

Dracula is the story of Lucy Seward, whose physician father runs an English sanatorium. She has been felled by a mysterious illness, one that has already taken her best friend. But Dr. Van Helsing, a continental specialist, part scientist and part detective, believes the girl has fallen victim to a vampire, perhaps their new neighbor, Count Dracula.

This production deals with mature themes and contains adult language

Director's Note

Since the publication of Stoker's *Dracula* in the late nineteenth century, followed by the two adaptations from Deane and Balderston, we sometimes have the temptation to dismiss the original story as somewhat antiquated and perhaps even a bit "campy." For me though, *Dracula* readily speaks to my childhood anxieties. In the lonesome anonymity of the city with its dark corners and hustle, the monster has the ability to touch everyone and anyone. I am still afraid of what is under the bed, what is in the closet, and

the creak at the top of the stairs. And even now, I have night lights in my hallway, not for safety but for comfort.

The tales of darkness have haunted me ever since I was six years old, watching late night horror films on *Channel 9*, on a ten inch black and white television, with the sound turned down, so that I wouldn't be caught. These nightmares have always seemed possible to me, no matter how many people laugh with delight. I can't imagine placing myself in the vulnerable position of visiting a "Horror House" because the reality is too real for me.

The theatre plays to our collective unconscious and imaginations, and in the most ironic of all situations, I find myself directing the very thing that frightens me most. I hope it works for you, too!

AB

About the novelist

The Dictionary of Literary Biography states "Without *Dracula*, Bram Stoker would be forgotten. As it is, he is one of the least known authors of one of the best known books."¹ Although Stoker also wrote children's stories, adventure and romance novels, he is best remembered as the author of the Gothic novel *Dracula*. *The Dictionary of Literary Biography* states Stoker's *Dracula* "not only sets the standard for subsequent novels of horror-mystery genre but also helped establish the vampire as one of the most recognizable figures in the popular arts."² Stephanie Moss writes "the novel [*Dracula*], like the count himself, has lived several lives in print, film, television, and in thousands of permutations."³

Bram Stoker was born in 1847 in Dublin. A graduate with honors in mathematics from Trinity College obtained an M.A. and switched to a Civil Service job. His first publication bearing the title *Duties of Clerk's of Petty Sessions in Ireland* left him bored. He switched into part-time literary activity, dramatic criticism and theatrical management for the actor Henry Irving for twenty seven years, combined with the development of his own pursuits in writing.

"Stoker's subsequent writings never matched the popularity of *Dracula*," notes *Contemporary Authors Online*, "though he twice attempted to capitalize on his novel's success: once with a stage adaptation, *Dracula or The Undead*, considered far inferior to Hamilton Deane's adaptation and with the short story *Dracula's Guest*, published posthumously in *Dracula's Guest, and Other Weird Stories*."⁴ He wrote 19 other books, several short stories, and periodical articles, but modern criticism has remained focused on *Dracula* while the remainder of his other writings have been largely unexplored.

About the adapters

Hamilton Deane, Dublin born playwright and director, brought *Dracula* to the stage. His family owned an estate adjacent to that of Bram Stoker's family. Deane entered the theater as a young man, first appearing in 1899 with the Henry Irving Vacation Company (Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*, was Henry Irving's Theatre manager for more than two decades). Even before he formed his own troupe in the early 1920s, Deane had been

thinking about bringing *Dracula* to the stage. Unable to find a writer to take on the project, he adapted the piece himself.

Gordon Melton remarks that audiences flocked to see this version of *Dracula*. By the end of summer in 1927, Deane's company had moved the production from *The Little Theatre* to the larger *Duke of York's Theatre*. "Following up on a casual remark by a reporter, Deane pulled off an almost legendary publicity stunt. He hired a nurse to be present at each performance to assist any viewers who reacted badly to the play by fainting or taking ill."⁵

In the fall of 1927, the Deane production caught the attention of vacationing book publisher Horace Liveright. Liveright would eventually become an incredible force in American publishing, releasing the works of such important authors as William Faulkner, E.E. Cummings, Ernest Hemmingway and T.S. Eliot. In this case, however, he was playing the part of theater producer; he bought the American dramatic rights from Bram Stoker's widow, Florence Stoker and hired newspaperman John L. Balderston to edit the Deane version of the play for the New York stage. According to Gordon Melton, Balderston's editing constituted a full rewriting of Deane's work, though Deane's name has been retained on all publications. The 1931 *Universal Pictures* film with Bela Lugosi merely increased the demand in England for Deane to keep his production of the play alive.⁶

John L. Balderston attended Columbia University and began a career in journalism as the New York correspondent of the *Philadelphia Record*. He moved to England and worked as editor for *The Outlook*; where he was the chief London correspondent of the *New York World*. Balderston authored his first play, *The Genius of the Marne*. He followed with *Morality Play for the Leisured Class*, *Tongo*, and *Berkeley Square*.

Gordon Melton notes, "Balderston was in England in 1927 when producer Horace Liveright attempted to purchase the American dramatic rights to *Dracula* from Bram Stoker's widow. Florence Stoker did not like Liveright, who turned to Balderston to assist him in the negotiations. Balderston had become known to Liveright after his play, *Berkeley Square*, a ghost story, became a hit both in London and New York. Balderston's version of the play was very different from earlier ones."⁷

Following the success of *Dracula*, Balderston went on to work on two more plays: *Red Planet* (with J. E. Hoare), and *Frankenstein* (with Peggy Webling). He also translated the Hungarian play *Farewell Performance* into English.⁸

According to Farson, "the actual writing of *Dracula* was apparently done during three vacations: in 1892 at Bocastle and in 1893 and 1896 at Cruden Bay, Scotland. The book was finally published in 1897."⁹

The Story

Bram Stoker's original novel, according to Brian Murray, "is constructed principally and masterfully of journal entries and letters written by several characters, including Jonathon Harker, an English real-estate agent who, in the book's opening chapters, describes his journey through Transylvania to the castle of Count Dracula, who wants to buy property in London."¹⁰

Count Dracula turns out to be "a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot," with reddish eyes, sharp white teeth, and a pale complexion except for his full, red lips. During Harker's stay of nearly two months at the castle, it gradually dawns on him that he is being held prisoner. Harker has many weird and terrifying experiences.

Harker finally discovers that the count sleeps in his coffin in a crypt beneath the castle during the day, and realizes that Dracula is preparing to have himself shipped to England. Harker's journal breaks off with his decision to try to climb down the sheer castle wall and the precipice below, in order to escape or die in the attempt. The plot continues and is quite complex, introducing many characters and adventures, culminating with Dracula's head being cut off and a knife is being stuck into his heart before his body disintegrates.

According to Daniel Farson of *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, "*Dracula* is extremely effective as a horror novel. In part, this is probably due to the fact that it touches universal human fears that are expressed in the myths of vampires, werewolves, and zombies, but it is also due to Stoker's skill. Although *Dracula* is usually classified as a Gothic novel, it was a stroke of genius to bring the vampire up to date with references to such modern inventions as Kodak cameras and Dictaphones. Placing the count in the mundane surroundings of fashionable Piccadilly makes him all the more alarming."¹¹

Farson makes note that "the documentary format of *Dracula*, which has been lost in stage and film adaptations of the story, does much to add believability to the novel. Sometimes the same scene is described from different points of view, colored according to the personality of the character who is relating it. The juxtaposition of the various diaries, letters, newspaper clippings, and so forth enables the reader, for much of the novel, to know more than any character does, and so heightens the suspense."¹²

Answers.com states the original Deane rewrite drops the novel's "beginning and ending sections that occurred in Transylvania. He [Deane] transformed Quincey P. Morris into a female to accommodate the gender makeup of his company at the time. He also recast the more sinister Dracula of the novel into a representative of cultured continental royalty capable of fitting into British society. Deane was the first to dress Dracula in evening clothes and a cape [an opera cloak]."¹³

In his preface to *Dracula: The Vampire Play*, Stanley Richards discusses why Stoker's *Dracula* has dominated imaginations for more than 100 years: "Unlike other monsters, Dracula is a man who walks among us...He is an aristocrat, a titled nobleman...He dresses impeccably and has cultured good manners and good taste to play the gracious

host to his victims...Where other monsters repel their prey, Dracula's suave gallant air, his intense burning eyes, exert a hypnotic charm."¹⁴

According to Gordon Melton, Balderston's revision of the play was very different from earlier rewrites. "His major changes included combining the characters of Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray into a single character, Lucy Seward, who became the daughter of the now mature John Seward. Originally Seward had been Lucy's young suitor. Lucy's other suitors, Quincey P. Morris and Arthur Holmwood, completely disappeared from the play."¹⁵

Melton believes the Balderston version has become the most influential of the several dramatic versions of the novel. "It opened on Broadway on October 5, 1927 and, after 241 performances, went on the road to Los Angeles and San Francisco. It spawned both a Midwestern and East Coast touring company. It has subsequently been the version most frequently used when the play has been revived through the years. Its most important revival began in 1977 when it opened for a new run on Broadway. Balderston's version also became the basis of two film versions of *Dracula* - the 1931 version with Bela Lugosi and the 1979 version with Frank Langella. It should be noted, Langella starred in the 1977 stage revival, as well."¹⁶

Fact and legend

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was not the first vampire story. It was the culmination of a writing tradition of Gothic horror stories that had begun more than eighty years earlier with *The Vampire* by John Polidori, *Varney the Vampire*, a serial that ran in magazines for two years, and J.R. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Camilla*. Stoker's inspiration for Count Dracula has been heavily debated; however, most critics agree that it was based on part on a historical figure called Vlad the Impaler. Vlad was "a fifteenth century Romanian ruler known for his indiscriminating brutality, which included a taste for impaling people alive on wooden spikes and watching them die in slow agony."¹⁷

At the Lyceum Theatre, Stoker met interesting people of the time in the private Beefsteak Club at the back of the theatre. According to Farson "Guests such as Henry Morton Stanley and Sir Richard Francis - who had translated *Vikram and the Vampire* (1870) from Hindi - were stimulating in their after-supper conversation; but the crucial inspiration came from the celebrity of the day, a Hungarian adventurer, traveler, and professor named Arminius Vambery, who recounted the legends of vampirism in eastern Europe. Stoker met Vambery on 30 April 1890; in August he began work on *Dracula*..."¹⁸

Brian Murray points out "a fascination with vampirism was not uncommon among European intellectuals and artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In *The Bride of Corinth* Johann Wolfgang von Goethe writes of a young woman doomed to wander eternally from the grave...Samuel Taylor Coleridge alludes to vampiric activity in *Christabel*, as does Sir Walter Scott in *Rokeby*, Lord Byron in *The Giaour*, and Robert Sothey in *Thalaba the Destroyer*..."¹⁹

Joan Acocella states “In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there were outbreaks of vampire hysteria in Western Europe; numerous stakings were reported in Germany. By 1734, the word *vampire* had entered the English language.”²⁰

Stephanie Moss believes “the folk mythology in *Dracula*, based on Transylvanian legend, was discovered by Stoker during his research in the British Museum and in the library at Whitby [his first vacation spot]. Much of this material has been traced to an excerpted 1895 article in *The Nineteenth Century* of E. Gerard’s 1888 travel text *Land Beyond the Forest*. Stoker was also influenced by Armenius Vambery...much of the character of Van Helsing may be patterned after him.”²¹

Joan Acocella asserts, “from 1931 and Lugosi’s *Dracula*, there have been more than a hundred and fifty *Dracula* movies. Roman Polanski, Andy Warhol, Werner Herzog, and Francis Ford Coppola all made films about the Count. There are subgenres of *Dracula* movies: comedy, pornography, blaxpotation, anime. There is also a *Deafula*, for the hearing impaired...*Dark Shadows*...*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*...Anne Rice...Stephen King...one source estimates that the undead have been featured in a thousand novels.”²²

Analysis

The Norton Anthology of English Literature offers an overview of Gothic literature as “a type of imitation medievalism. When it was launched in the later eighteenth century, *The Gothic* featured accounts of terrifying experiences in ancient castles – experiences connected with subterranean dungeons, secret passage ways, flickering lamps, screams moans, bloody hands, ghosts, graveyards, and the rest. By extension, it came to designate the macabre, mysterious, fantastic, supernatural, and again, the terrifying, especially the pleasurable terrifying, in literature more generally.”

Stoker’s novel relies heavily on Gothic convention. However, Stoker modernizes his novel moving from the conventional Gothic setting of the ruined castle into the crowded scenes of London’s Piccadilly. Stoker illustrates the impact of two disparate worlds colliding – the ancient and the contemporary. The Victorian age faced a host of challenges to its identity: the repercussions of scientific advancement, the consequences of abandoning traditional familial belief systems, religion, and the dangers of feminine sexuality.

“According to Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, *Dracula*’s crimes are merely symbols of real-life sociopolitical horrors facing the late Victorians. One was immigration. At the end of the century, Eastern European Jews, in flight from pogroms, were pouring into Western Europe, thereby threatening to dilute the pure blood of the English, among others. *Dracula*, too, is an émigré from the East...At that time; furthermore, people in England were forced, by the scandal of the trials of Oscar Wilde (1895), to think about something they hadn’t worried about before: homosexuality.”²³ It is worth noting that Stoker’s wife, Florence had been seriously courted by Wilde before choosing Stoker as her beau of interest. Joan Accocella writes, “according to some critics,

another thing troubling Stoker was the New Woman, that turn-of-the-century avatar of the feminist.”²⁴

Daniel Farson states “Recent critics have penetrated the surface of the novel to find something much more complex than a rousing horror and adventure story.”²⁵ Most notable is the novel’s symbolic and overt sexuality: the exchange of blood – whether willing, as with transfusion, or unwilling – is seen as both a bonding and a transforming act.

While the story line of the play differs slightly and is more “censored” than the actual novel, Farson points out modern critics have also noted “the strong, symbolic, and somewhat perverted sexual content of the novel. The heroines, Lucy and Mina, are totally pure and sexless; after her transformation into a vampire, Lucy becomes a sexual aggressor... Blood appears to be a metaphor for semen in the novel: Van Helsing warns Seward and Morris not to let Holmwood know that they, too, have all given blood to his finance, as if that would be a betrayal of his trust; and Holmwood himself says that by virtue of giving his blood to Lucy, he feels that he is, in fact, married to her. The reaction of the males to the sexual aggression of the females is a mixture of excited anticipation and repulsion. The stake with which vampires are dispatched is an obvious phallic symbol, and it is noteworthy that the only ‘stakings’ in the novel are of women by men... This violent metaphor for sexual intercourse seems to associate the sex act with pain and with punishment of the woman for her seductiveness.”²⁶

“The publically prudish Stoker – who once wrote an essay calling for censorship of works that exploit ‘sex impulses’ – would probably be shocked to read much of the recent criticism of *Dracula*,” asserts Murray. “*Dracula* repeatedly reveals intense interest in a woman’s capacity to extend and receive physical pleasure but simultaneously reinforces that notion that, in the end, a man ought to settle for nothing less than an angel constrained and doting; that a woman who has attained carnal knowledge – especially illicitly – has been rendered unclean and thus much too tainted for the respectable bourgeois male.”²⁷

Things to think about prior to performance:

- Consider the Vampire legend. How and what are your pre-conceptions about *Dracula*?
- Consider the latest craze for Vampire stories (*Twilight*, *True Blood*). What do you think the Vampire represents in today’s world and why does it continue to be popular?
- Consider our familiarity of the *Dracula* story. Is it possible to see the story without doubt and a sense of hardness? Or can we view the story with naiveté?
- Consider that we may be skeptics, in the modern world, and the *Dracula* story may challenge our faith and comfort. What notions do you think it may challenge?
- Consider the implication that *Dracula* is merely an evil presence rather than a real character. Is there a difference? If there is a difference, what is it?

Things to watch for in performance:

- Notice the effect of the environment on each of the characters.
- Notice who has power in each scene and how that power is demonstrated.
- Notice the effect that Dracula has on each character. Is that effect specific to each character or the same?
- Notice this play is both a mystery and a drama. Do you find yourself filling in the blanks or putting the puzzle together or do you find yourself empathetic? If the answer is both, can you pin point why?
- Notice the effect of the sound design on your experience.
- Notice the costumes and how each piece informs your opinion of that character.
- Notice the effect of the lighting design on you experience.

Things to think about after the performance:

- What was the difference between seeing this piece – live –and watching something like it on television or on film? Can you articulate the difference?
- Why do we, as a generalization, enjoy exploring things that frighten us? How are scary tales related to roller coasters? What is that ‘thing’ that makes us come back for more?
- There are several “mirrors” or parallels between characters. Can you name those events and describe the comparisons?
- What do you think happens to Dracula at the end of the production?
- What do you think happens to Renfield after the end of the play?
- What do you think happens to Lucy after the end of the play?
- Why is Dracula repelled by certain Christian objects? Can you name those objects and develop a theory behind your assertions?
- Why does this legend continue to exist and find new life in generation after generation?

Other Analysis “Tools”:

- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but, more importantly, the last thirty seconds? In that time, WHAT happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is ‘about’?
- And what is the significance of the title? Why did the playwright decide that this was the most quintessential title for his work?

The running time for this production is approximately one hour and a half and includes one ten-minute intermission. This production contains adult themes and language.

Please note that a **pre-show** discussion will take place prior to the preview performance, Thursday, October 15th at 6:45 pm – 7:15 pm. The pre-show discussion will include the director and designers, and will be a discussion of the approach to this production.

The **post-show discussion** will take place on Friday, October 23rd, following the performance. The post-show will be with director, cast and crew, and will be fielding questions from the audience. Post-show occurs after the show, for approximately 30 minutes.

Endnotes

- ¹ Murray, Brian. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Moss, Stephanie. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ⁴ "Bram Stoker." *Contemporary Authors Online*, The Gale Group, 2003. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ⁵ Melton, Gordon. *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead*, 2nd Edition. Michigan: Visible Ink Press, 1999.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ "John L. Balderston." <http://www.answers.com/topic/john-l-balderston-1>
- ⁹ Farson, Daniel. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ¹⁰ Murray, Brian. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ¹¹ Farson, Daniel. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ "Hamilton Deane." <http://www.answers.com/topic/hamilton-deane>
- ¹⁴ Richards, Stanley. Preface. *Dracula: The Vampire Play*. New York: Nelson Doubleday, 1979.
- ¹⁵ Melton, Gordon. *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead*, 2nd Edition. Michigan: Visible Ink Press, 1999.
- ¹⁶ John L. Balderston." <http://www.answers.com/topic/john-l-balderston-1>
- ¹⁷ "Dracula," *Novels for Students*, Volume 18, Gale, 2003. Literature Resource Center. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ¹⁸ Farson, Daniel. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ¹⁹ Murray, Brian. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ²⁰ Acocella, Joan. "In the Blood." *The New Yorker*, A Critic At Large, 16 March, 2009.
- ²¹ Moss, Stephanie. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ²² Acocella, Joan. "In the Blood." *The New Yorker*, A Critic At Large, 16 March, 2009.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Farson, Daniel. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Murray, Brian. "Bram Stoker." *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 36: British Novelists, 1890 – 1929: Modernists. The Gale Group, 1985. College of DuPage, 17 July, 2009.