

Dr. Henry Jekyll is an esteemed and respected physician living in London, circa 1883. These are troubled times, however, as a series of ghastly, nocturnal murders and beatings have gripped the city. Soon it becomes apparent that a vicious and brooding thug named Edward Hyde is responsible for the crimes, and may somehow have a connection with the austere physician. For his part, Dr. Jekyll has taken to exhausting research in his home laboratory, often disappearing from his butler Poole and his friends Enfield and Utterson, even as the investigation of Hyde draws a police inspector and Jekyll's own friends closer to a disturbing truth.

First published in 1886 as a novella titled *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson's classic horror tale of the duality between good and evil in one human being has been adapted more than 120 times on stage, film, TV and radio. It was an immediate hit when first published and has inspired generations of writers ever since, including Jeffrey Hatcher, whose new adaptation is the season finale on The Rep's main stage.

What can I say about Victorian literature? I'm an unabashed fan of the period, from the novels of Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens to painstakingly faithful adaptations such as the *Masterpiece Theatre* version of *Bleak House*. Throw in an Anglophile reverence for the likes of Sherlock Holmes and works such as *Brideshead Revisited* and *Remains of the Day* and I am one delighted aficionado.

Hatcher's version of Stevenson's enduring story is enormously pleasing to traditional sensibilities while also introducing a novel element or two to the proceedings, such as having four different actors portray Jekyll's nefarious alter ego, Hyde. Under the precisely calculated direction of Edward Stern, this latest incarnation of *Jekyll & Hyde* is absorbing and spellbinding stuff for fans of things that go bump in the night, with a little modern psychology sprinkled in for effect.

Just as he did with The Rep's production of *Sherlock Holmes: The Final Adventure*, Stern shows his proclivity for ripping yarns and fine old storytelling in this handsome, entertaining presentation. He's aided by an expert sound design by Rusty Wandall that keeps the mood taut and tingling, and the wonderfully atmospheric lighting of Thomas Hase that helps visualize the creepy London fog and the desolation of God-forsaken streets. Elizabeth Covey provides the elegant togs of the era, while Robert Mark Morgan's simple set focuses on an erudite backdrop for Dr. Jekyll's home and plenty of room up front for the players to mingle.

While there's an unfortunate tendency to morph into melodrama, for the most part the cast delivers some nifty performances. Anthony Marble does a fine job as the stoic but tortured Jekyll, while Katie Fabel brings a strong love interest to this adaptation as Elizabeth Jelkes, a young woman who falls for Hyde despite his villainy. Anderson Matthews is superb as the lawyer who attempts to decipher the mystery at hand, Scott Schafer is solid as the pompous and vengeful Sir Danvers Carew, Bernadette Quigley is the dutiful Poole and Kyle Fabel is Jekyll's trusted friend Dr. Lanyon.

Most intriguingly, the latter four actors all take turns as the enigmatic Mr. Hyde, bringing out various facets of his murderous personality. Matthews and Quigley in particular offer disturbingly vibrant interpretations of the creature's evil machinations.

While offering a new interpretation, Hatcher's work is decidedly for devotees of old-fashioned stories of terror bereft of pools of blood and the modern shock shows that too often pass for art. See it yourself and decide what style of storytelling you prefer.

Rating: A 4.5 on a scale of 1-to-5.