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ON WITH THE SHOW: Sherlock Holmes Aficionados In For Treat

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By Shirle Gottlieb | 0 comments

It's hard to believe that nine years have passed since the Long Beach Shakespeare Company found a permanent home in the Richard Goad Theatre.

Considering its fiercely loyal fan base, it's harder still to acknowledge that many people have never set foot in this intimate little theater. With less than 50 seats, the stage is so close it makes viewers feel like they are part of the play.

If you're the least bit curious about LBSC (the 14-year-old brainchild of Helen Borgers, its founder), now is the perfect time to check it out. On stage through Oct. 29 is "Sherlock Holmes and the Hound of the Baskervilles."

Not only did Borgers adapt Arthur Conan Doyle's world-famous mystery by following the author's dialogue verbatim, and cutting the text down to approximately two hours; she also directs the high-energy production.

In such a limited space, atmosphere is all-important. Hats off to Richard Lindsey and Judy Markwell for their functional, multi-purpose set; Mike Stokesberry for sound/light design; and Barbara Josefsberg for her authentic period costumes.

Heading the 11-member cast is professional actor Richard MacPherson, who certainly has the characteristic physical features that followers of Sherlock Holmes demand, and Carl Wawrina. An LBSC favorite who has been in 20 productions, Wawrina plays Dr. Watson, Holmes' dedicated, devoted sidekick.

When news reaches London that Sir Henry Baskerville, the American heir of the Baskerville fortune, has rushed to the family estate in Dartmoor when his uncle, Sir Charles, is savagely killed by the bloodthirsty hound, Holmes knows he has work to do.

For generations, the legendary hound has haunted the moor, threatening the lives of any Baskerville who might inherit the 100-year-old property. And now Sir Henry (Charles's naive nephew played by Daniel Moseid) has arrived in England. Someone must protect this innocent young man.

Since legal matters detain Holmes in London, he sends Watson ahead with Dr. Mortimer (Mike Austin) to investigate. Why was Sir Charles out on the moor so late at night? Was he killed by real or supernatural forces? That's how the mystery first presents itself.

Fans of Sherlock Holmes who know the spine-tickling plot will be royally entertained by this LBSC production, along with those in the audience who watch it unfold for the first time.

Kevin Douglas Dunn and Summer Gorbea play Barrymore and his wife (Sir Charles's long-time, loyal servants), who have a deep dark secret.

William Christopher Ford (a member of the Screen Actors Guild) played James Stapleton on opening night. (This part is shared with Peter Fuller on other dates.) A botanist by trade, Stapleton is visiting his sister, Beryl (Adrienne Marquand), so he can hunt for rare insects and butterflies that inhabit the moor. But things begin to get suspicious.

Supposedly, there's an escaped convict roaming the moor; if so, how does he survive in such a desolate landscape? And why is a woman heard crying? And what causes boots to get lost and reappear, and what causes the hound to keep howling?

In fact, how did the legend of the fearful, man-eating beast get started in the first place? What part does Frankland (Perry Sites) play in the madness, and who is Laura Lyons? For answers to all of the mysteries and the part Holmes played in solving them, call 997-1494 or go on www.lbshakespeare.org.

"Sherlock Holmes" continues at 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and at 2 p.m. Sunday through Oct. 22 at the Richard Goad Theatre, 4250 Atlantic Ave.

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