

ADG Europe presents TNT Theatre Britain in:

DRACULA AND THE ECO WARRIOR

By Paul Stebbings based on the novel by Bram Stoker and exploring the environmental crisis of our planet.

Production background

This new version of DRACULA follows on from the international success of our current production of FRANKENSTEIN – the Monster and Myth. The latter production has been in repertoire for the past three years and performed to large audiences across two continents. The play is an original play that uses the framework of Shelley’s novel and the Hollywood films but includes many new scenes and even characters to explore the morality of science and the issues raised by the creation of artificial life. While these serious and complex themes are explored the style is fast physical theatre and grotesque comedy. Horror as a genre is best suited to film, theatre tends towards comedy when employing horror and this is used to good effect in our version of FRANKENSTEIN. But this is not to trivialise the subject, as our guide Shakespeare knows well, comedy is every bit as profound and complex a form as tragedy. Our intention is to use the stylistic lessons learnt by us and enjoyed by our audience in FRANKENSTEIN to mount a new and relevant production of DRACULA that aims to do far more than excite an audience through simple terror.

Production concept

DRACULA is one of the few truly modern myths. The name of the novel resonates as do few other titles. But the very success of the book and its endless Hollywood spin offs has led to cliché’ and tired stereotype. Our idea is to rejuvenate the story by moving it away from Gothic Horror towards a wider relevance, to develop the simple parallel between sucking the blood from humans to sucking the life force from our planet. Are humanity itself a multi-headed vampire feeding on the lifeblood of the living planet and turning it into dust?

Our production explores climate change, global warming, climate change denial, urban pollution and its relation to lifestyles, and diet and fast food consumption in relation to environmental degradation. The authors are working with a university

lecturer in environmental science and a highly qualified physicist to ensure factual accuracy. The production is not evangelical, it aims to ask questions and provoke debate not preach. A teaching pack will be available to encourage classroom discussion. The actors will be available to discuss the play and the issues it raises with audiences whenever the tour schedule permits.

Plot lines

The play follows the structure of the original and takes characters from the novel while updating and expanding the story to deal with the themes stated above. The British Lawyer Harker travels to Pennsylvania (not Transylvania to meet Dracula in his luxury hideaway in the urban jungle. Dracula wishes to buy property in an environmentally friendly Eco City in Europe.

Harker is terrified by the landscape through which he travels – this is an environmental nightmare, a city scape where humanity’s relentless pursuit of short term pleasure has turned fertile land to dust, where pollution has poisoned the air and the water, where wild animals are extinct and pest thrive, where disease is rife and immunity low, where food has lost all connection with nature and humanity has lost all connection not only with the earth but with each other.

Harker enters the palatial modern castle of Dracula and the events of the novel unfold in this new context. He signs over property in Europe to the “Count” and is almost driven insane by his nightmarish experience in this eco-nightmare.

Back in Europe the characters of the novel gather to try and rescue Harker. Meanwhile Dracula prepares for his journey, ramming his oil tanker into the shore at once beautiful Whitby he floats to land on the oil slick following the original, transforms himself into a giant dog (having murdered the crew). His coffins are salvaged and transported to his new residences in Eco Town.

The Vampirism of the book is maintained – but expanded. So that Dracula changes environmentally aware citizens into raving climate change denying, polluting super consumers by many methods that include both biting them but also feeding them. He uses his newly acquired properties to set up fast food chains which both seduce and consume their customers. He attacks the family of Harker as in the novel. He destroys the environmental scientist Lucy, raises her from the dead and recruits her to his dark conspiracy.

But now the forces of ecology strike back. Harker returns from Pennsylvania alive and wanting revenge. His wife is a transport executive with “green” credentials (Mina Harker) and Lucy’s best friend. Together they recruit the Eco Warrior Van Helsing from Amsterdam. This band of “eco-warriors” pursue and fight Dracula across the city just as the original characters do in Stoker’s novel. With great sadness they destroy Lucy and close in on the “Count” in his huge fast food outlet. Dracula in rage almost destroys Mia but cornered he escapes and flees back to Pennsylvania on giant jetski.

Van Helsing and the Harkers race after the Vampire. The final confrontation takes place in the environmental ruin that we all dread. One of the Harkers dies but the Monster of our own unrestrained environmental destruction is laid to rest. But will the Vampire rise again to haunt us all?

Style

The production will build on the style of serious comedy that TNT founders Paul Stebbings and Phil Smith have developed for decades and have taken with ADGE across the world: high intensity physical theatre, newly commissioned musical score, live singing, action and intelligent humour combining with the grotesque. The style has been seen in such company successes as THE MURDER OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (major award winner at the Edinburgh Festival), FRANKENSTEIN- The Monster and the Myth , THE GHOST OF EDGAR ALLAN POE and even the powerful social comedies of Dickens OLIVER TWIST and A CHRISTMAS CAROL. We look forward to combining the entertainment with serious themes once and appealing to a wide audience whose first language need not be English. We aim, as ever, to make theatre that explores the pressing issues of our day in an exciting and accessible style.

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TNT theatre Britain in

DRACULA

An ecological horror story,
a 21st century Vampire drama
by Paul Stebbings and Phil Smith

based on the novel by Bram Stoker
producer: Grantly Marshall
director: Paul Stebbings
music: John Kenny