

Sherlockian Theatrical Society

A non-Judgmental Play Appreciation Society

Number 9

May 15, 2022

July 13, 2022

“Sherlock Holmes & the Case of the Ghost Machine”

By David McGregor

Chelsea, Michigan



Double your pleasure, double your fun with two reviews of the same play. Uncritic #010 was in Chelsea, Michigan on May 15 and Uncritic #001, yours truly was there on July 13 so put on your reading specs and enjoy two reviews for the price of one. We saw the plays weeks apart and there were different actors but the same sterling results.



ON July 12, Uncritic #001 boarded an airplane and flew to Detroit, Michigan. After arriving, I picked a rental car with Sirius XM radio and headed west to the town of Chelsea. Chelsea is the home of The Purple Rose Theatre Company. The theatre is staging the world premiere of David McGregor's "Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Ghost Machine." I have never seen this play before so I suppose that is what "World Premiere" means - go

figure. The play opened on April 15 and runs through August 27, 2022. It would be well worth the effort to see this play.

Set in London, England November 1905 and civilization is edging toward World War I. London and the world are changing as the tensions build in Europe. Victorian England seems like a distant dream. We were able to follow Sherlock Holmes, played by Mark Colson, when he is visited by Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla played respectively by David Bendena and Rusty Mewha. They regale Holmes with a story of two new inventions that will alter the course of human history. The only problem for Holmes is the inventions are missing.

With the help of his trusted roommate and friend, Dr. John H. Watson, (Paul Stroli) and Irene Adler (Sarab Kamoo), they meld together to help the Master with more than just a single mystery. Add in Professor Moriarty's daughter Marie Chartier, played by Caitlin Cavannaugh, the audience is led on a romp that leaves one breathless after an unexpected death at the end of Act I. Fear not for all is deduced brilliantly by our hero and the end of the play.

Playwright David McGregor told me his two previous Sherlockian plays, along with this current production have been turned into novels. ***Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Elusive Ear*** and ***Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Fallen Souffle*** are the titles and are available along with ***Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Ghost Machine*** wherever one normally purchases their reading material. David has also authored a non-fiction (aren't all Sherlock Holmes stories non-fiction?), two-volume book titled ***Sherlock Holmes: The Hero with a Thousand Face***. Please check these books out and help keep the memory **green**.

As a reminder, The Sherlockian Theatrical Society is a non-judgmental society. It is our belief that any play about Sherlock Holmes is worth attending. Even if the cast is dead and the play is staged in the morgue, there could be something positive to say, like 'Wow, even under the stage lights, the players never broke a sweat.' We love Sherlock Holmes and we love live theater, so nothing will deter us off of our chosen path.

Uncritic #001
Flower Mound, TX
July 14, 2022



The latest outing of the Sherlockian Theatrical Society started with a grim disappointment. On May 15, I, Ann Caddell, intrepid Uncritic #010, while visiting friends in Ann Arbor, Michigan, tried to attend a production of "Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Ghost Machine" at the Purple Rose Theatre in nearby Chelsea. Imagine my chagrin upon finding that the presentation had just been cancelled due to a positive Covid test in the cast. While dedicated to being non-judgmental about plays, I am perfectly willing to be judgmental about viruses, and I give Covid an emphatic two thumbs down for wrecking my entertainment plans.

However, undeterred in carrying out my duty to Sherlockian theater, I returned in June to sponge off of my Michigan friends again and to make another attempt, this one successful, to witness the world premiere of this original drama. The theater, the play, and the actors made it worth the wait.

The Purple Rose Theatre Company is a professional acting troupe founded and still helmed by movie star Jeff Daniels, and named after the film "The Purple Rose of Cairo." While the venue in Chelsea, Michigan is small and informal, like the town, everything about the production is high-quality.

The *Ghost Machine* is the latest in author David MacGregor's "**Sherlock in Love: The Holmes-Adler Mysteries**" pastiches. (The previous two include "**The Elusive Ear**" and "**The Fallen Souffle**.") Holmes and Irene Adler have teamed up both professionally and domestically, and Holmes has become perhaps a bit too domesticated, wearing an apron and happily serving breakfast while neglecting his consulting detective business. Irene's determination to snap him out of his lethargy leads the pair, along with a slightly hung-over Watson, into the middle of the rivalry between Nikola Tesla and Thomas Edison. The plot involves enough electrifying twists and turns to keep this current Sherlockian lit up with incandescent glee. Although there are strong hints of a supernatural element, the "ghost" part of the evening is ultimately resolved in true Sherlockian (and Scooby-Doo) fashion to have a purely natural, if convoluted, explanation.

Unlike in some other recent Sherlockian plays, each of the five actors plays only one character - but they play them to the hilt. Mark Colson as Sherlock Holmes has the right lean, intense physique and comes across perfectly as either languid or high-strung, depending on the situation. Paul Strioli as Dr. Watson manages the balance of serving as Holmes's sidekick while still projecting a strong (and not offensively bumbling) personality of

his own. Sarab Kamoo's Irene Adler has all the passion and intellect that one would expect of "THE woman," while Aphrodite Nikolovski as Marie Chartier (Professor Moriarty's daughter) gives off a convincing femme fatale vibe. Rusty Mewha and David Bendena as Tesla and Edison play their rivalry for all it's worth.

The professional level of the company is very much on display in the beautiful Victorian stage setting and costumes. From the dapper Watson to the disheveled Edison, the gentlemen's clothing sets off their individual characters nicely. Irene and Marie are decked out in elaborate nineteenth century female fashion, with perhaps the most intricate hats I've ever seen.

Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Ghost Machine" runs through August 27, and offers the perfect excuse to get out of the Texas heat and head for cooler climes. Michigan is beautiful, Chelsea is charming, and "Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Ghost Machine" is a winner!

Uncritic #010
Dallas, TX
May 15, 2022

Break a leg!!! Heck, break two legs!!

