

Prime Stage Theatre



Bringing Literature to Life

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Prime Stage Theatre presents
***The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance**
A True Life Story of An Extraordinary Individual
By Katie Mueller

(PITTSBURGH, PA) - Prime Stage Theatre - known for staging adaptations of classic literature - takes on Bernard Pomerance's Victorian English drama *The Elephant Man*.

Corsets, petticoats and top hats. Victorian England is alive and well at Prime Stage Theatre as it sets to open the moving story of *The Elephant Man*. Celebrating its 15th season, Prime Stage takes the spotlight to tell the tragic story of John Merrick, a man born with Proteus Syndrome, a neurological disorder causing an elephant-like appearance. Finding himself a victim of a circus sideshow, John is quickly taken in to London Hospital by Frederick Treves, a surgeon, who cares for the disfigured man until his death at the age of only 27.

Utilizing historical images of life in a 19th century circus as a guide, seamlessly mixed with the stark and lonely world of London Hospital, Prime Stage's seasoned design team is ready to take you inside the ring. The designers, Johmichael Bohach (scenic designer), Angela Baughman, (sound design), J.R. Shaw (lighting design), Peter Milo (projection design) and Cassandra Bass (costume design) are thrilled to be collaborating on such a visually stunning project.

"I'm drawing on inspiration from the circus posters of the time and using the same garish color to achieve an exaggerated reality," says J.R. Shaw, who is celebrating his tenth production with Prime Stage. "I will be using strong single sources of light, extreme angles, and heavy shadows." Shaw's research extends from beautiful sepia photographs of a sideshow circus to bleak and somber images of English operating theaters, which he hopes to use as a tool to transport audiences back in time.

Sound designer Angela Baughman, who created original music for Prime Stage in 2011 with *The Scarlet Letter*, will again be composing pieces for *The Elephant Man*. "I love playing with unusual instruments. This was a great opportunity to write a song for the accordion, which I was lucky enough to have Bonnie Bogovich, a very well-respected local multimedia and musical technology artist, record for me." Baughman's love of authentic instruments will synthesize beautifully with the emotional experience of such a grievous story of a social outcast. "I'm excited to help evoke a particular mood in the audience, to aid in the telling of such an important story. This kind of steampunk circus world is really fun to explore and I think people are going to have a wonderful time."

This Victorian steampunk design genre, described in the urban dictionary as “what the past would look like if the future happened sooner,” will be heavily reflected in Johnmichael Bohach’s stunning stage design. “We have faded panels of red and white canvas to create a canopy above the audience with the center ring below, and by placing the audience “in-the-round,” we help to create a feeling that you are there to see a spectacle.” Bohach, who is in his 6th season with the company, is also looking to “evoke a design that makes the audience feel that they are seated in a medical examination gallery, there to overlook the Elephant Man’s progression. A truly voyeuristic view.”

Director Richard Keitel could not have put it better, “the story of the Elephant Man is a haunting masterpiece of compassion, beauty and ultimately, humanity.” So step right up, and grab your ticket to Bernard Pomerance’s *The Elephant Man*. The shows opens February 24th, 2012 at The New Hazlett Theater.

WHAT: *The Elephant Man* by Bernard Pomerance

WHO: Prime Stage Theatre

WHERE: The New Hazlett Theater
6 Allegheny Square E
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

WHEN: February 24 - March 4, 2012
Showtimes: Friday & Saturday @ 8:00PM / Sunday @ 2:30PM
Desserts with the Director - Saturday, February 25th & Saturday, March 3rd

TICKETS: Adult \$20/Senior \$15/Student \$10
Online via <http://www.ProArtsTickets.org/events/view/961>
or by phone at 412.394.3353

WEBSITE: www.primestage.com

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