

Prime Stage Theatre



Bringing Literature to Life

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**January 13, 2012**

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**Prime Stage Theatre presents**  
***The Elephant Man***  
**A True Life Story of an Extraordinary Individual**

**Pittsburgh, PA, January 13, 2012** – Prime Stage Theatre brings the profound and touching story of John Merrick to life in its production of *The Elephant Man*, Bernard Pomerance’s award-winning play, opening February 24 and running through March 4 at the New Hazlett Theater. Richard Keitel directs.

*The Elephant Man* was the Broadway favorite of 1979, winning both the Tony Award and the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Play. A poignant and thoughtful journey to the core of human dignity, the play questions the perception of what it means to be truly beautiful; it hauntingly compels the audience to question what it means to be compassionate.

The play is based on the true life story of Joseph Merrick, a Victorian Englishman born with a life-threatening, grotesque deformity. Regarded as a freak and doomed to spend his life as a carnival sideshow attraction, he struggled with both physical and emotional agony.

Befriended by Dr. Frederick Treves, a famous young surgeon who educated him and introduced him to London society, Merrick blossomed from an object of pity and fear into a sensitive, refined and artistic young man. Those close to him come to love his inner beauty and spirit, but the play questions whether Merrick eventually faced a new form of exploitation, as he became the favorite pet of the rich and famous.

Under Keitel’s direction, set designer Johnmichael Bohach, sound designer Angela Baughman, costume designer Cassandra Bass, and lighting designer JR Shaw, will transform the New Hazlett Theater into the dark world of a Victorian carnival.

Director Richard Keitel says, “What I love about *The Elephant Man* are the issues it raises that are still relevant today. What is considered beautiful? What is considered ugly? *The Elephant Man* teaches us to look into the soul of each other and see the true spirit located inside. The story is a haunting masterpiece of compassion, beauty and ultimately, humanity.”

Keitel directed *American Buffalo* and *Collected Stories* for City Theatre, *Wild Duck* for Quantum Theatre, *Room Service* for Point Park Conservatory and *Of Mice and Men*, *Tuesdays With Morrie*, and last season’s *The Glass Menagerie* for Prime Stage. He was also the third recipient of The Harry Schwalb Award for Excellence in Theatre by *Pittsburgh Magazine*.

Sean Sears portrays the physically and emotionally demanding title role of John Merrick without special effects makeup so audiences see the soul of the man and not the body. Justin Fortunato portrays Dr. Treves. Justin has played Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*, Mitch Albom in *Tuesdays with Morrie*, and Rev. Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter* for Prime Stage, as well as Georg Nowack in *She Loves Me*, and Gordon Miller in *Room Service* for the Pittsburgh Playhouse.

## EVENT DETAILS

**WHO:** Prime Stage Theatre

**WHAT:** *The Elephant Man*

**WHEN:** February 24, 2012 through March 4, 2012

Showtimes: Friday & Saturday @ 8:00 PM / Sunday @ 2:30 PM

Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra will perform in the lobby on opening night - February 24<sup>th</sup>

Desserts with the Director - Saturday, February 25th and Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Meet with Richard Keitel to discuss his concept, the story, and this production.

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

**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](http://www.primestage.com)

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