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Norwegian Explorer June 2011 Events

Sherlockian Tour of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts

The tour of the MIA by docent Robert Brusica was filled beyond capacity and was very successful according to all reports received.

The Sign of the Four in Chicago

Now through July 3, 2011 at City Lit Theater, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue, Chicago, Box Office: 773-293-3682, www.citylit.org/, “Don Bender returns as Sherlock Holmes in our world premiere adaptation. ‘Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science,’ Holmes tells Watson at one point in the novel, ‘and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner.’ Thank heavens Watson ignored him; the good doctor's natural story-telling gifts make this one of the greatest Holmes tales. Adapter and director Terry McCabe was Jeff-nominated for both his previous Holmes adaptations, *Holmes and Watson* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.”

The Study Group takes on “Sherlock Holmes: The Play”

The Norwegian Explorers Study Group will be discussing the William Gillette play, “Sherlock Holmes”, on Saturday, June 18, 2011 from 2 to 3:30 pm in the downstairs meeting room of the Arlington Hills Library in St. Paul (1105 Greenbrier Street, Saint Paul, Metro Transit 64, Payne Avenue and Geranium stop). The play is found in *The Published Apocrypha*, (Jack Tracy), *Famous Plays of Crime and Detection from Sherlock Holmes to Angel Street* (Van Cartmell & Bennett Cerf) or at (www.diogenes-club.com/sherlockplay.htm). See also, Andrew Malac’s illuminating 17-page pamphlet “Molding the Image: William Gillette as Sherlock Holmes” online at the U of M’s Sherlock Holmes Collections website (<http://special.lib.umn.edu/rare/wg.pdf>).

(See Study Group questions on the next page.)

*You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson...”
“The Adventure of the Empty House”*

STUDY GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. How do the extended scenes of the villains make this play different than the Watson-narrated stories?
 - 1a. Do the very extensive stage directions put in by Gillette rob actors and directors of their creativity?
2. Sherlock Holmes does not arrive until nearly two-thirds of the way through the opening act. What effect does this long delay have?
3. Why are Holmes and the criminals so *polite* to one another? (“Ah, Craigin — delighted to see you.”)
4. Billy the page boy plays a much bigger role in the play than he does in any of the Canonical stories—why? What effect does this have?
5. Why doesn’t Mrs. Watson appear in the play?
6. The most famous scene in the play is Act 3, The Stepney Gas Chamber scene. It is worth remembering that Gillette wrote this scene *before* Arthur Conan Doyle had written “The Retired Colourman” (in which two characters are killed by gas). Is this an example of Gillette influencing ACD rather than the other way around?
7. Isn’t gassing somebody to death rather a clumsy way of going about it?
8. Is it really likely that Holmes would fall in love?
9. What things in the Gillette play do not appeal to today’s audience?

FROM WHICH STORIES ARE THE FOLLOWING DRAWN?

- ? Swandam Lane? ? The cocaine-shooting scene? ? Holmes’s observations of Watson? (“How do I know that you’ve opened a consulting room and resumed the practice of medicine without letting me hear a word about it? How do I know that you’ve been getting yourself very wet lately? That you have an extremely careless servant girl — and that you’ve moved your dressing-table to the other side of your room?) ? Holmes’s criticism of Watson’s literary talents? (“has prompted you to chronicle and — if you will excuse my saying so, to somewhat embellish — a few of my little — adventures, you have occasionally committed the error — or indiscretion — of giving them a certain tinge of romance which struck me as being a trifle out of place. Something like working an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid.”)
- ? Professor Moriarty? ? Holmes’s trying to escape from life’s boredom? (“My whole life is spent in a series of frantic endeavours to escape from the dreary commonplaces of existence! For a brief period I escape”) ? The use of a fake fire alarm to reveal a hiding place? ? The use of a false malady to draw Watson away from Holmes (BILLY: I beg pardon, sir, Mr. Forman’s just sent over from the chemist’s on the corner to say ’is ’ead is a-painin’ ’im a bit, an’ would Dr. Watson ———kindly step over and get ’im something to put on it.)
- ? The burning of the 221B Baker Street apartment by the bad guys (“the devils have burned me out”)?
- ? The Lascar? (“Go and tell Lascar we must have a good lamp.”) ? Madge Larrabee’s cock-and-bull story about her brother facing arrest? (MADGE: “As to take the plans of our defenses at Gibraltar from the Admiralty Offices. They think he stole them, doctor — and they’ve arrested him for it — you see, he works there. He was the only one who knew about them in the whole office”)
- ? Count von Stalburg? Sir Edward Leighton?

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