



Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors
is a resounding success

Description

Dracula's blood thirst becomes a side-splitting show at the Segal Centre

By Byron Toben

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In 1897, Dublin-born **Bram Stoker** published the 7th and most famous of his 17 novels, **Dracula**. That story went on to be adapted into numerous TV shows over the following 144 years. Stoker himself created the character of the vampire only at London's Lyceum Theatre, where he was the author of the content but because Stoker did so only to protect his copyright.



Bela Lugosi shot to fame by portraying the vampire



~~Transylvanian count in the 1931 Hollywood movie although there was a 1922 German silent film, **Nosferatu**, based on the book. Other spin-offs included **Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein** (1948), wherein Dracula is also a character, and **Roman Polanski's** bumbling **The Fearless Vampire Killers** (1967).~~

At an early Montreal Bloomsday celebration, a film was shown at Victoria Hall exploring Stoker's Irish influences on this book. I found the current show at the Segal to echo some Jewish influences, such as Mel Brooks.

Anyway, the opening night press evening for **Dracula: A Comedy of Terrors** was resoundingly cheered. The production was lively and spirited, with some Monty Python feel to it. Directed by co-author **Gordon Greenberg** (last here to direct *Piaf/Dietrich*), his co-author was **Steve Rosen**.

As every sports coach will tell you, you're only as good as the players you are given or acquire. So congrats to long-time Segal casting director **Rachelle Glait** for assembling a pitch-perfect quintet.

James Daly is superb as Dracula, dramatically draping himself in his huge black cloak, even though his fancy white cuffs (shades of Seinfeld's puffy shirt!) get caught up and need extra coaxing to appear.

David Noel masters two roles – Mina (Harker's fiancée) and vampire killer expert Van Helsing (here an unmarried woman to the astonishment of the other Victorian-era characters!)



Naomi Ngebulana debuts as both Lucy Westfeldt and Kitty. **Colin Simmons** also in his Segal debut, captures four characters – real estate agent Jonathan Harker, Suitors, a Bosun and a Gravedigger.



Ellen David is fantastic in four roles – the driver of a carriage to Dracula’s castle, the captain of a boat carrying Dracula to England, the insane vermin-eating Renfield at the Westfeldt asylum, and Dr. Westfeldt himself.

Lots of quick costume changes were required, so the trio of stage manager **Elaine Normandeau**, assistant **Melanie Ermel** and apprentice **Ava Bishop** were kept very busy.

Some campy elements, such as a Lucy admirer yelling “I love Lucy,” evoking memories of the classic Lucille Ball TV series. I wonder what Lucy (deceased 1989) would make of all this. Or, for that matter, Willy Shakes (deceased 1616) of the title inspired by his *Comedy of Errors*.

Dracula: A Comedy Of Terrors continues at the Segal Centre main stage until November 15.

segalcentre.org

Images: *Emelia Hellman*

Byron Toben, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*’s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for Canadians.

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