**Ghost Stories**

**Introductory Notes**

Welcome to this introduction to Ghost Stories, at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. It is written by Jeremy Dyson and Andy Nyman and directed by Jeremy Dyson, Andy Nyman and Sean Holmes.

The audio-described performance will take place on Friday 26th April. The time of the touch tour is yet to be confirmed, so please check with the Box Office. The introductory notes will start at 6.45 and the performance itself at 7pm. The play lasts for 80 minutes, with no interval. The live audio description will be given by Ruth James and Alison Clarke.

The theatre’s official warning reads: ”Please be advised that Ghost Stories contains moments of extreme shock and tension. The show is unsuitable for anyone under the age of 15. We strongly advise those of a nervous disposition to think very seriously before attending.” To add to this, there are very loud sounds and haze and bright torch light often shines out directly at us. There are also moments of total darkness, when even the EXIT signs go out.

Before we enter the auditorium, the entrances to the theatre are darkened and decorated with black and yellow striped warning tape. Industrial lamps - bare bulbs held within a yellow plastic cage – are linked with thick wires and suspended from the ceiling of the corridor. These continue within the theatre and loop over the ceilings and ornate balconies. There are also numbers chalked at random intervals over the walls – 1, 6,19, 20, 32, 48, 79 and 92. These continue into the auditorium, under the balconies and over the walls.

On either side of the proscenium arch, the carved plasterwork is covered with black plastic stretched over flat boards and bound in place with more black and yellow striped warning tape. The stage itself is closed off with an unpleasantly stained, dark-green Safety Curtain, with the red letters of the words Safety Curtain dripping down, as if the Curtain is often damp.

A black metal lectern stands in front of the Safety Curtain, on the far left of the stage in a pool of light, as if positioned for an academic lecture. A thin-stemmed microphone is attached to the left of the lectern and a glass of water on the right.

As we wait for the show to start, the industrial lamps flicker and dim from time to time. They make a faint buzzing sound. There is also a soundscape of dripping, puddled water and a whisper of a distorted, distant wind.

**Professor Philip Goodman** is the first to appear. He bursts into the auditorium and bounds up the steps to take his place at the lectern. He is a stocky figure in his early 40s. His full brown beard and tousled collar-length hair, together with his dark brown corduroy suit, light brown shoes and black shirt, gives him the look of an archetypal academic. This impression is confirmed when he introduces himself as a Professor of Parapsychology. He has a remote control, with a bright green laser pointer at the end, which he uses to click up the slides which illustrate his lecture. Goodman also has a mini tape recorder, which he rests on the lectern and uses to introduce the subjects who are the focus of his lecture.

He first introduces **Tony Matthews**. Tony is an older man with white hair, in his late fifties or early sixties, his eyes twinkling from his square, lived-in face. He wears a dark suit and workboots. Tony appears behind the Safety Curtain, which is, we now realise, a gauze that rises to reveal the disused factory where Tony works as a Night Watchman. There is a large dark archway at the front, arching over a large space with three massive metal doors on the left, the first marked 19. A small rectangular window shines yellow on the right, and is set into a door. As Tony opens the door, his night-watchman’s room spins round towards us, the narrow end open to us. It’s small and cramped, with nicotine-stained walls and ceiling, lit by a bare bulb that dangles down on a cord. There’s an old girly photo of a bare-breasted, beautiful woman pinned to one wall over a wooden kneehole desk, its surface crowded with objects. On the desk is a thermos flask and mug, a radio, a walkie-talkie and an old computer monitor, its screen turned away from us. The back wall has a full noticeboard with a large high-viz jacket hanging on a hook beside it. On the left wall is a shelf, with an angle-poise lamp, a CD player and more bric-a-brac.

Next Goodman introduces **Simon Rifkind**. He’s 20, his wide eyes uncertain and nervous in his fresh, open face. Simon has short brown hair and wears jeans, pale sneakers and a maroon jumper with white horizontal lines patterned over it under a black puffa jacket. We meet Simon in a gloomy forest: a road leads away into the distance and disappears under the black night sky, bare tree trunks with thin leafless branches high on each side and overhead.

The third testimony comes from **Mike Priddle**, a man in his late 30s, smartly dressed in a dark blue business suit with a wide, bright red tie. His very short, neat hair is greying at the temples. Mike is a city high-flyer, constantly on his mobile. His location is the nursery in his large house. At the back is a floor to ceiling French window, the glass panes covered with a flowing net curtain. The white painted ceiling rises up towards us, the side walls are painted black, and all slope back to the windows, giving a skewed perspective and making the room seem unnatural. On the right is a large cot with a mobile of brightly coloured animals attached to the cot’s rail. The mobile turns and plays a tinkly music when turned on. On the left is a white baby-changing station, piled high with disposable nappies and everything else a baby could need.

The next location we visit is a series of darkened, stained brick arches that fade back from us into the darkness. Other locations and details will be described as they emerge during the performance, as describing them now would break the code of secrecy imposed on the audience at the end of each show – as it is, we may have already said too much…

**Cast**

Simon Lipkin plays Professor Goodman

Garry Cooper plays Tony Matthews

Preston Nyman plays Simon Rifkind

Richard Sutton plays Mike Priddle

**Creative Team**

The Fight and Movement Director is Roly Botha

The Special Effects are by Scott Penrose

The Sound is by Nick Manning

The Lighting is by James Farncombe

The Design is by Jon Bausor

The Associate Director is Joe Murphy

The Directors are Jeremy Dyson, Andy Nyman and Sean Holmes

Written by Jeremy Dyson and Andy Nyman