

Sherlock Holmes at the Brumder (//thesmallstage.weebly.com/blog/sherlock-holmes-at-the-brumder)

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Randall T. Anderson and Jim Owczarski was Holmes and Watson.

Arguably there is no character in pop fiction who is quite as popular as Sherlock Holmes. The heroic investigator first crept onto the page in 1887. Years later, he's in the public domain and many have told of his adventures. One such storyteller was writing for television when he came across an idea for a rather unorthodox Holmes story.

British writer Jeremy Paul wrote scripts for a long-running British TV adaptation of Sherlock Holmes that was on the air from the mid-'80s to the mid-'90s. Somewhere in the midst of that, he wrote a stage play that was distinctly unlike the typical Sherlock Holmes story that play is now being staged at the historic Brumder Mansion courtesy of **Milwaukee Entertainment Group**.

The Secret of Sherlock Holmes' deviation from expectation is apparent in the cast, which consists entirely of Holmes, his associate Dr. Watson and the looming shadow of his arch-enemy Professor Moriarty. With such a small cast, the drama is perfect for a cozy, little space in a mansion that was built in an era where creator Arthur Conan Doyle was still writing Holmes' original stories. (The space has a history with Holmes. It had also played host to Liz Shipe's Holmes trilogy in relatively recent memory.)

Directors Tom Marks and Amanda J. Hull have an excellent pair of actors to work with on the show. **Randall T. Anderson** has a very precise charisma about him in the title role. He handles the daunting task of breathing life into a character played so well by so many others in the past. As the title suggests, the **POWERED BY** does not into any other mystery than Holmes himself. Anderson inhabits the twin roles of

Russ Bickerstaff

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mystery and detective quite well. A torch cast directly into the heart of one of the most celebrated figures in all of literature would challenge any actor. Anderson allows the legend to be both approachable and impossibly mysterious at the same time. It's quite an accomplishment.

Jim Owczarski is the other half of the cast. He plays Watson. **Owczarski** lends an emotional gravity to the drama in the role of Holmes' longtime associate. Thankfully, the playwright delicately allows Watson something approaching equal intellectual footing for Holmes, which is absolutely essential if he's going to be the only other guy onstage. The drama focusses-in on the relationship between the two colleagues. A good portion of what Owczarski is accomplishing here is simply playing host between Holmes and audience...giving him a warm social space in which to inhabit. More than that, though, Owczarski has a sharp, dry wit about him that lends the character a classiness that comes to equal that of the deeply troubled Holmes.

The tradition of Holmes' stories has the detective piecing together disparate bits of information to solve an ostensibly unsolvable crime. It's a bit like stage magic: present the mystery, lift the curtain and show the solution. Everyone is mesmerized and feels a bit pleasantly like an idiot. What's quite clever about Paul's presentation here is the fact that it ISN'T a traditional Holmes mystery. Here's how it worked for me: the mystery of Holmes is presented. A central premise of the story is revealed. Instinctually, I knew what the probable solution to the problem would have been. The plot ran its course. Holmes outlined a theory which backed-up what I instinctually thought was the right answer and then proceeded to defend that theory. Holmes is working hard to understand that which seems quite apparent. This was my experience with the show anyway: It's just the reverse of traditional mystery fiction. Your gut instinct is right and what seems impossible turns out to be plausible. You walk away from the whole experience feeling fiercely clever without having had to do a whole lot of work. I don't know that Paul had intended this when he wrote the script, but if he did, it's quite a way to tell a story.

Anyway...mystery aside, this is the story of a couple of friends who care about each other. One of them is plagued with the distortions of genius. The two of them work through the inner demons. It all plays-out quite briskly with a brief intermission. It's a fun, uniquely dramatic experience in a historic space.

Milwaukee Entertainment Group's production of *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* runs through Feb. 10 at the Brumder Mansion on **3046 W. Wisconsin Ave.** For ticket reservations and more, visit Milwaukee Entertainment Group online (http://milwaukeeentertainmentgroup.com/secret_of_sherlock_holmes).

One More Thing: Later-on this year, Randall Anderson tackle the daunting role of another detective as he appears in *Columbo* with the Alchemist Theatre. (<http://www.thealchemisttheatre.com/>)

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