



The Woman In Black

adapted by Stephen Mallatratt

from the book by Susan Hill

directed by Jono McAteer

The Armidale Playhouse

Director's Note

Jono McAteer

There's something deeply human about wanting to be frightened in the safety of a theatre. Horror reaches past logic and straight into the nerves. That's what drew me to *The Woman in Black* and its beautifully spare stage adaptation by Stephen Mallatratt. It doesn't rely on spectacle. It relies on you.

Our theatre is intimate. Our technical resources are modest. But rather than seeing that as a hurdle, I've come to feel it's exactly what this story needs. Gothic horror thrives on suggestion. A shadow in a small space feels closer. Silence feels heavier. When you can hear someone else breathe in the dark, the line between audience and story begins to blur. In many ways, the limitations become the atmosphere.

This production is also a marked departure from my last directorial outing, *Black Comedy* by Peter Shaffer, which was built on pace, precision, and laughter. Comedy throws everything into the light. Horror asks what might be standing just beyond it. I was intrigued by that shift. Could we truly unsettle an audience using only actors, sound, space, and imagination? As H.P. Lovecraft wrote, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."

While there are too many people to thank individually there are a few I would like to give special mention to.

Firstly I want to thank my wife, Xanthe, for enduring a far scarier task than Mr. Kipps' spending those nights in Eel Marsh House – solo parenting our two young children for many long, tiresome evenings whilst I rehearsed.

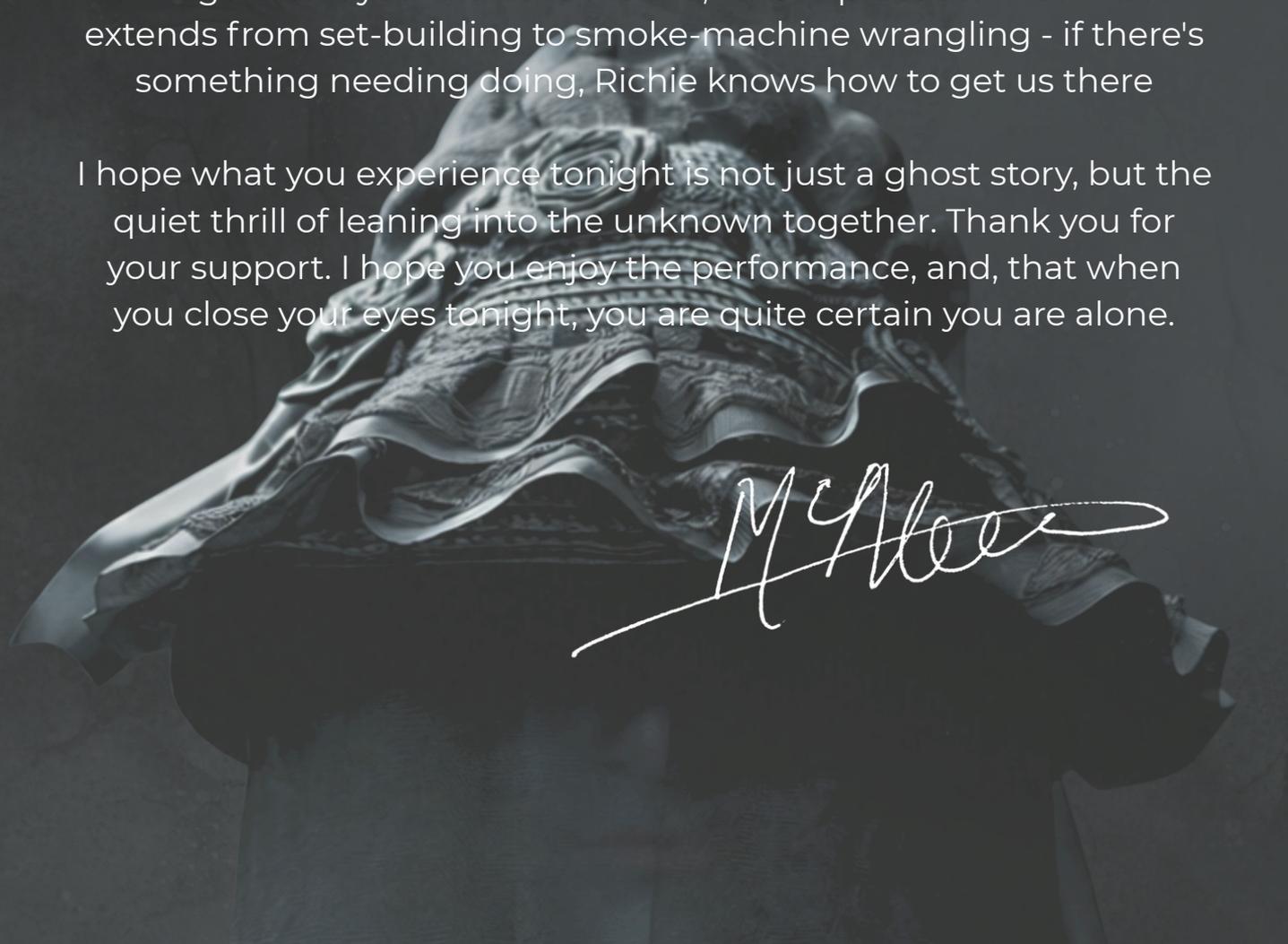


I would be also be remiss to not mention the inimitable Ida Topić and Carmel Reilly – both of whom have fulfilled basically every role that one can be assigned in a production team and then some. They have also, at various critical moments, gently prevented their director from making bold and unnecessary decisions. This show would be a shadow of what it is now without their invaluable contribution.

My deepest gratitude also goes to Nathan Mark, who took every lighting idea I offered and translated it into something technically possible. When it became apparent that my understanding of the lighting plot was built largely on confidence rather than knowledge, he quietly reworked and refined the entire design. Without him, it wouldn't just have been *The Woman in Black* on stage — it may well have been everything else in black, too. We were very fortunate to have his expertise.

A huge thank you to Richie Kiehne, whose practical know-how extends from set-building to smoke-machine wrangling - if there's something needing doing, Richie knows how to get us there

I hope what you experience tonight is not just a ghost story, but the quiet thrill of leaning into the unknown together. Thank you for your support. I hope you enjoy the performance, and, that when you close your eyes tonight, you are quite certain you are alone.



M. McAleer



William Billingsley

Long ago on the sodden English coast, a teenage girl wouldn't let her dad coach her for the Portsmouth Festival of the Performing Arts. So, Dad put her six-year-old brother in the competition too and coached him secretly at the foot of the garden. The boy, Will, liked being on stage and never left. Where else do you get to tell so many stories in so many voices?

Over the years, he's been in community theatre in Brisbane and student theatre in Cambridge. In Armidale, he has mostly played in comedies (The Importance of Being Earnest, Mamma Mia!, Clue, Noises Off). Tonight though, Will, who once lived next door to a ghost and whose ancestor was buried "with bell, book, and candle" to exorcise the electricity he dabbled with, would like you to meet the haunted Arthur Kipps – not an actor – and the various characters he plays.





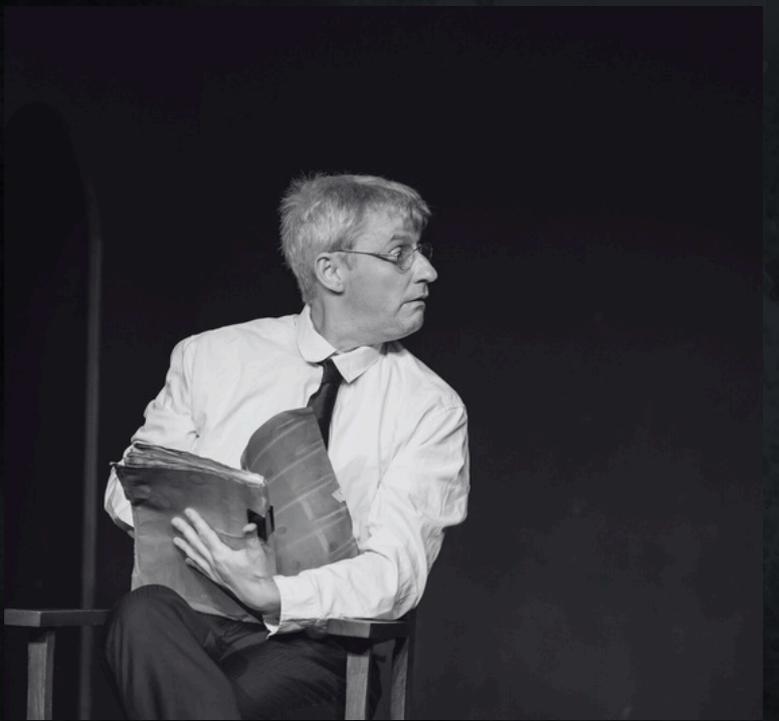
Cal Hunter

Ever a theatre nerd, this will be Cal's 19th Show with ADMS since joining the society in 2016—first appearing as a pinball wizard in *The Who's Tommy*, and most recently directing *Next To Normal*. Some other memorable roles during this time include Marius (*Les Miserables* - ADMS,) Moritz (*Spring Awakening* - *Little Fish*,) Angel (*Rent* - TDS,) Mark/Mia (*Things I Know To Be True* - ADMS,) Autolycus (*The Winter's Tale* - *Empty Space*,) and Leaf Coneybear (*The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* - ADMS.)

As a kid who watched far too many horror movies, and read *Goosebumps* in order to fall asleep at night, they've always had a love for the ooky-spooky, eerie, and macabre. In 2021, Cal completed their honours in Theatre and Performance at UNE, writing their dissertation on Lovecraftian Horror and Weird Fiction.

This haunting tale ought to be a thrilling addition to Armidale's already diverse theatre repertoire.







Crew

In a production like this, everyone truly does a bit of everything. With a small team this show has been built on generosity, teamwork, and a shared love of storytelling. From the big creative decisions to the smallest behind-the-scenes details, it has been a wonderfully collaborative effort.

A huge and heartfelt thank you to our amazing crew — your time, talent, and willingness to pitch in wherever needed have made this production possible. We are so grateful.

Kayne Baker
Zoe Baker-Smith
Neil Horton
Richie Kiehne
Sabine Kiehne
Rafael Kiehne
Josh Lisle
Nathan Mark

Xanthe McAteer
Elliott McAteer
Carmel Reilly
Jess Rothschild
Amy Showell
Geneva Stocker
Ida Topić





Thank you

A special thank you to Nick Troon and Tune FM.

To our wonderful Front of House volunteers. Your friendly faces help everything run smoothly behind the scenes. Shows like *The Woman in Black* simply wouldn't happen — or feel the same — without your time, care and community spirit.

ADMS Program for 2026

June - Stage Whispers

July - Rocky Horror Show

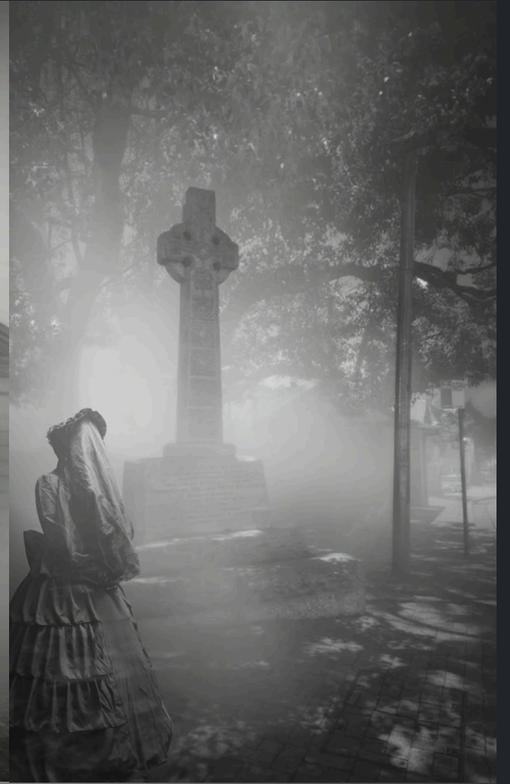
October - Calendar Girls

November - The Glass Menagerie

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The Playhouse