

The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch

Mr. Punch was a Los Angeles Times Critic's Choice and critics Pick of the Year!

"the rewritten and recalibrated production is a triumphant fusion of text and technology, as potent a distillation of childhood terror as can be found outside the Brothers Grimm... The amazing design elements set a new standard for sub-99-seat theater." LA Times

The LA Times did a follow-up to their original article with interviews with the designers and a 13-image gallery with exclusive backstage photos!

American Radio Network critic Gerri Garner picked Punch as her Critic's Pick of the Year. Los Angeles CityBeat called it a "design tour de force." The Smiling Spider said "The production is so innovative I had to ask The Rogues where they come from. I couldn't believe it when they told me this grandguignolesque and gargantuesque theater feast was made in L.A..... I hope they will stay."

Our punch-themed gallery featured artwork by Lloyd Matthews, Michael Pukac, Tom Ashworth, and Verlena Johnson, as well as a puppet display from the collection from Alan Cook and the International Puppetry Museum. Live music every Friday included performances by Figureone, Josh Steinmetz, Marcela Carmona, Jesca Hoop, and Tales of Banyan.

Adapted from the best-selling graphic novel by Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean, Mr. Punch is a dark fable in which the innocence of childhood and the pain of adulthood collide in the oft-fragmented recesses of memory. The man's memories of his boyhood at his grandfather's seaside arcade are full of talking badgers, crocodiles, car accidents, mermaids, and murder...or could that just have been the Punch and Judy show? "It is easier to take short journeys into the past, remembering in miniature, tiny puppet plays in our heads."

This world premiere production of The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch returns exclusively to Los Angeles after a successful run at Theatre/ Theater in 2007 and features an updated script with new scenes and effects.

Variety Magazine called Mr. Punch "a feast for the senses."

"...triumphantly mixes traditional puppeteering, shadow puppets, masks, video projections and more into a thriving whole." -- Backstage West

Mr. Punch received FIVE honorable mentions at the 2007 Backstage West Garland Awards

The maverick Rogue Artists Ensemble, known for an innovative hybrid of theater traditions, puppetry and digital media called "Hyper-theater," brings a dizzying array of visual elements to Mr. Punch that will make audience members feel as though they opened up the graphic novel and wound up trapped deep inside.

(Contains adult themes and imagery; not recommended for young children.)

As Judy, dear Judy herself says, "it's started now, and it can't be stopped, not even if the Devil and all his crocodiles came up from hell to stop it."

"He threw the baby out of the window. Then he battered his wife to death. He killed a policeman who came to arrest him. He caused the Hangman to be hanged in his place. He murdered a ghost and outwitted the Devil himself."

Excerpt from Mr. Punch

To celebrate Rogue Artists Ensemble's 5th Anniversary, we premiered an original adaptation of the famed graphic novel Mr. Punch by the author/illustrator team of Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean. Brought to life by Rogues with Hyper-theater, the project featured a dizzying array of visual elements to allow the audience to feel as if they have stepped into a graphic novel.

Originally published in 1995 and centered on a Punch and Judy performer at a sea side arcade, Mr. Punch is a twisted tale of murder that explores the fragmented nature of memory. It's a dark fable about the innocence of childhood and the pain of adulthood.

Both Gaiman and McKean have created many best-selling pieces of literature, comics, graphic novels, and children's books, in addition to the recent Henson Pictures film Mirrormask.

Additional information about the collaborators:

About Neil Gaiman:

Neil Gaiman is the critically acclaimed and multiple award-winning author of several novels including ANANSI BOYS and AMERICAN GODS, bestselling children's books, and short story collections, including his most recent FRAGILE THINGS, published by HarperCollins in the fall of 2006. He is also the creator of the of

the wildly successful SANDMAN series of graphic novels. The film version of STARDUST, produced by Matthew Vaughan, will be released in the summer of 2007, while CORALINE is currently being adapted into a stop-motion film at Pandemonium, to be released in 2008. The graphic novel adaptation of CORALINE will also be published in the summer of 2008. Coming up in 2007 is Gaiman's children's short story collection "M"; IS FOR MAGIC and middle-grade novel INTERWORLD, both published in June by HarperCollins. He is currently working on a new middle grade novel, THE GRAVEYARD BOOK.

More information: <http://www.neilgaiman.com>

About Dave McKean:

An award-winning illustrator, McKean has illustrated bestselling children's books, collaborated on comic books and graphic novels, designed CD covers, and directed films. His solo project includes writing and illustrating the ambitious graphic novel CAGES, and he has illustrated several comic books written by Neil Gaiman, including SIGNAL TO NOISE, MR. PUNCH, and the SANDMAN series. He also illustrated many of Gaiman's picture books, including THE DAY I SWAPPED MY DAD FOR TWO GOLDFISH and the bestselling THE WOLVES IN THE WALLS, which was named one of the New York Times Best Illustrated books of 2003. His debut as a feature film director came in 2005 with the movie MIRRORMASK, for which he also illustrated the accompanying books. McKean is currently working on the illustrations for CRAZY HAIR, a children's book with text by Neil Gaiman, to be published by HarperCollins in 2009.

More information: <http://www.mckean-art.co.uk/>

After a hugely successful world premiere in 2007, Mr. Punch returned to Los Angeles in July 2008. The show ran from July 18 to September 7 at the Bootleg Theater in downtown Los Angeles. Shows were Fridays at 8:00 PM, Saturdays at 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM, and Sundays at 4:00 PM. The Gala Premiere on July 18th at 6:30 PM featured special musical guest FIGUREONE, and every Friday night show after the premiere weekend feature another live musical act. And all shows included admission to the puppet history display in the lobby.

Photos, Videos and Images from the Production

In the Press

“It is easier to take short journeys into the past, remembering in miniature, constructing tiny puppet plays in our heads. That’s the way to do it.”

Excerpt from Mr. Punch

The remount of The Tragical Comedy or Comical Tragedy of Mr. Punch was produced by Rogue Artists Ensemble in association with Bootleg Theater. The original production in 2007 was made possible by generous support from The Jim Henson Foundation and was produced in collaboration with Jeff Murray of Theatre/Theater in Los Angeles.

Credits below pertain to both the 2007 original production and the 2008 remount unless otherwise noted.

2008 Cast:

(in alphabetical order)

Don Allen

Tom Ashworth

Sean Eaton

Dana Kelly

Kerr Seth Lordygan

Connor Merkovich

Matt Ritchey

Nina Silver

Miles Taber

Cari Turley

2007 Cast:

(in alphabetical order)

Tom Ashworth

Sterling Beaumon

Eric Fagundes

Leslie Gray

Dana Kelly

Dalton O'Dell

Lucas Salazar

Nina Silver

Miles Taber

Cari Turley

Directed by:

Sean T. Cawelti

Adapted for the stage by:

Sean T. Cawelti with Miles Taber and Rogue Artists Ensemble

Additional Adaption Work:

Bonnie Walker (2007)

Stage Manager:

Joe Soto (2008), Alex Suha (2007)

Dramaturgy by:

Megan Owings (2008), Bonnie Walker (2007)

Puppet Design by:

Joyce Hutter

Mask Design by:

Pat Rubio

Scenic Design by:

Joel Daavid

Technical Direction by:

Tyler Stamets

Music Composed by:

Ben Phelps

Video Design by:

Brian White (2008), Patrick Heyn (2007)

Sound Design by:

John Nobori

Lighting Design by:

Melissa Joy Domingo

Choreography by:

Nate Hodges

Costume Design by:

Kerry Hennessy

Makeup Design by:

Wes Crain (2008), Catt Brenton (2007)

Assistant Stage Managed by:

Trisha Siedlecki (2008), Leslie Gray and Cari Turley (2007)

Casting Director:

Scott Westra

Illustration and Video by:

Brian White and Paul Evangelista

Dialect Coach:

Paul St. Peter

Assistant Puppet Design by:

Leslie Gray (2008), Verlena Johnson (2007)

Puppet Builders:

Leslie Gray and Brian White (2007)

Assistant Mask Design by:

Jennifer Owings and Danny Montooth (2008), Cari Turley and Mike Rubio (2007)

Assistant TD/Scenic Designer:

Katie Polebaum (2008), Don Cuney (2007)

Assistant Lighting Designer:

Haylee Freeman

Poster and Flyer Design by:

James White signalnoise

Conceptual Artwork for Mr. Punch Created by:

Pat Rubio and Sean T. Cawelti

Some images in the stage adaptation of Mr. Punch are from the original graphic novel and are used with permission from Dave McKean.