

HOW NOT TO STAGE A PLAY

AT THE ROYAL THEATRE IN THE AFTERMATH OF A ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

Kurt Bachard

Flash
Fiction online

It's no joke trying to find performers for a stage play since the end of the world. Who'd want to be a casting director in the zombie aftermath?

We're supposed to be putting on Macbeth at the Royal Theatre. Not my choice; gloomy bloody play if you ask me, but it's still all the rage for the survivors. You'd think they would want something more upbeat after all that putrid resurrection hoo-hah. Personally, I think half of them are such gormless twits that nobody will notice the difference once they start to zombie, too. Oh, but it will all come clear when the rot finally sets in good and proper, and they start to reek of old corned beef, and limbs are falling off all over the shop, like the others.

I had to ditch Martha for that very reason. I did an Armitage-Hitcher number on her and cracked her a hard one on the bonce as we were driving up the motorway one morning, then kicked her out the car as I sped into Wimbledon. *Bumpety-bumpety-bump* and off she rolled. Nobody even swerved to avoid her. I had no regrets – I mean, she was at that stage where it was becoming necessary to put her glass eye back in every time she fell asleep.

But, ah well, the play's the thing, or so some spam-headed idiot said.

Well, honestly, you should hear these dead-beats, and I use the term literally of course, spewing their *doths* and *thees* and *thous* on stage. Or maybe you shouldn't.

I have to suffer this rotten indignity all day, my back aching in these silly auditorium seats up the front row, with my clipboard and pen, like I care, and I'm supposed to be rating these decaying bone-decrepitating cretins.

Martha used to tell me that's how you know it has started, with back ache.



Moan, moan, shamble, and moan, that's all they do.
"Your name, please. And throw your voice, not your whole lunch or a lung, thank you."
"Blarthbley Wurrerlytom."
Scratch-scratch with my pen. "Again, please!"
"Arll sebbd Byblars Blarthbler—"
"Nope. I still can't understand you. I'm sorry, but maybe you should try re-auditioning when you've worked out how to make vowel sounds properly while *rigor mortis* sets in."
Eh. Why bother? "Next!"
We had no toil and trouble finding suitable actors to play the evil trio of witches. The air was foul and foul was the air! Rotting meat-breath so sharp it melted the paint off the back wall. And actually we do have a couple of promising actors for the roles of lady Macduffedup and Lady Macca, although one has to keep tying on her

jaw bone with a ribbon and the other has half a face, a bit like Edith, my assistant. (“Yes, thanks for the cup of tea, Edith, but what’s that ear doing floating in my mug?”) And if we’re not quick about staging this thing when the Queen arrives on Monday for the Royal Variety, I’m certain these two will be too putrefied to honour any kind of role except a dead Duncan. Ah, but there is no art to find the mind’s construction in the face, certainly not when half their faces have fallen off, or are just about to go. Sleek over your rugged looks, indeed! You have to laugh.

Well, actually, you don’t.

“No, no, no, fellas, please, no more clowns, wrong theatre, guys. Cream pies in the face are not my cup of tea, thank you... and please take all your limbs with you, there is no lost property here, and we’re short on cleaning staff since the janitor’s head fell off last week, thank you. Next!”

Last week, now *that* was a riot. Three hours I had to wait for a bunch of the zombie fools to disentangle in the wing because they’d rushed on together. What a nightmare! We were casting for the English army battle scene. If not for my stage helpers, I’d have been there all night waiting for these morons to learn how to walk in a straight line.

“Fief off commowdoors—”

At least this one is making an effort at enunciating. But alas... “No, no, no... We have some lady Maccas... Yes, yes, very gothic, nice touch with the gory dribble, but we’re looking only for the Macca himself today, thankouthankyou. Wrong side! Stage left please. Next.”

Well, you may be wondering why I haven’t been infected with the plague. No straightforward answer to that one, I’m afraid. Some of us appear to be immune or to have a slower rate of decay than others. I’m not sure which I am yet, immune or just slow, though of course I’d much rather be the former.

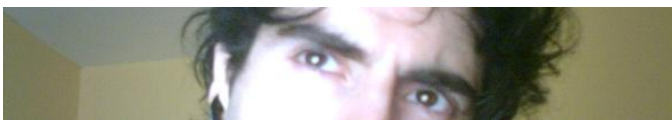
And yet another one shambles on to replace the last hopeless hopefuls. They say your IQ drops by 95% when you zombie, although I’ve noticed with most actors there isn’t much discernible difference.

When they fall into the pit, rattling out a *crash-bang-wallop* on the cymbals, it’s like a joke punctuation in a tacky cabaret bar. But I’m used to it by now. It’s not my job to train them.

"Edith *pleeeeee*, drag that one out of the pit. He’s cluttering up the place. And, oh Edith, is this really an ear I see before me? In my tea? If it’s not yours... Oh, you’ll have to speak up, dear, I can’t hear you properly over that racket.

“NEXT!” ●

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Kurt Bachard lives in South London, UK, where he was raised as a feral child by stray dogs on a council housing estate. His work has appeared in numerous publications in print and online. He also writes under the pen name Sophie Bachard. Occasional updates may be found at bachard.wordpress.com.