

The Mystery of Irma Vep: A Penny Dreadful
presented by The Theatre Project and TP&Co

The Players Theatre
115 MacDougal Street

Written by Charles Ludlam
Directed by Christian Amato

Review by Ronald Gross
New York Theater Buying Guide
www.nytheaterguide.com

January 25th, 2016

BOTTOM LINE: Our highest recommendation. A hilarious farce miraculously mashing-up Shakespeare, Hitchcock, and Brontë among others, wondrously performed by a superlatively-talented duo. Be afraid ... be very afraid – you may do yourself injury as you roll your eyes at the outrageous allusions, and laugh til it hurts in the back of your neck.

“Any man who dresses up as a woman can’t be all bad,” exclaims one of the stars of this exhilarating romp. By the time he delivers that line, we’ve been delightedly whip-sawed back and forth by two quick-change artists supported backstage by two dressers, playing seven characters, with 35 costume changes. Who could disagree?!

The unbelievably dynamic duo consists of Tyler Nye and Dominic Sellers, each of them widely experienced Shakespearian actors. Together, they portray an array of classic “penny dreadful” types, including vampires, ghosts, mummies, and werewolves. Their performances are a stand-out in the current Off-Broadway scene.

The direction by Christian Amato is pure genius. Kudos too to Brianna Hurley and Carmela Lane for sensational costumes, and Muliner & Bogart for scenic design.

This classic of Alt Theater won numerous awards when it opened in the Village in 1984, and played for two years. It was the most-produced play in the U.S. In 2003.

After seeing one of Ludlam's plays, theater critic Brendan Gill famously remarked: “This isn’t farce. This isn’t absurd. This is absolutely ridiculous.” Ludlam called his company the Ridiculous Theater. Tragically, the author died at the age of 44, in 1987, from AIDS.

TIP: Dine beforehand at the adjacent Olive Tree Café at 117 MacDougal, an enchanting restaurant with outstanding cuisine – consider the borscht which is a meal in itself, and the “everything” middle eastern salad plate with hummus and stuffed grape leaves.