

From: "[REDACTED]"
To: "Stephanie" <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: "Sleep No More" : 530 West 27th Street/bet 10/11 Avenues
Date: Wed, 20 Apr 2011 14:18:27 +0000

You are the best. Thanks so much

Sent via BlackBerry by AT&T

From: "Stephanie" <[REDACTED]>
Date: Wed, 20 Apr 2011 10:17:06 -0400
To: <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: "Sleep No More" : 530 West 27th Street/bet 10/11 Avenues

I believe it runs every night (it may or may not be dark on Mondays). So anytime JE wants to go, let Anuschka know and she will arrange. I can also arrange too if you like, depending on what night works for his schedule.

Always happy to help ☺

From: [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]]
Sent: Wednesday, April 20, 2011 10:16 AM
To: Stephanie
Subject: Re: "Sleep No More" : 530 West 27th Street/bet 10/11 Avenues

Hey stephanie. When is this show?

Sent via BlackBerry by AT&T

From: "Stephanie" <[REDACTED]>
Date: Wed, 20 Apr 2011 09:46:31 -0400
To: <jeevacation@gmail.com>; <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Peggy Siegal<[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: "Sleep No More" : 530 West 27th Street/bet 10/11 Avenues

Hi Jeffrey,

Please see the contact information below. Anuschka will arrange tickets for you. I have also included a couple reviews.

Let me know if you need anything else.

ANUSCHKA SENGE

Events Manager

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/20/theater/sleep-no-more-from-punchdrunk-transforms-chelsea-warehouses.html>

Stage Is Set. Ready for Your Part?

By [ERIK PIEPENBURG](#)

IF New York's junk shops, antiques fairs and confectioners have fielded some odd requests recently, it may be because the British theater company Punchdrunk is coming to town for the first time. The props list for its show "Sleep No More," an environmental, stylized mash-up of Shakespearean drama and Hitchcockian noir, reads like the contents of a madman's shopping cart: plastic teeth, animal eyes, hair samples, several kinds of blood, caramel spray.

Since Punchdrunk was founded in 2000, it has made a name for itself for its immersive sense of stagecraft.

For "Sleep No More," which arrives in New York after a run at a school near Boston in 2009, the company took over six stories of three adjoining warehouses on West 27th Street in the Chelsea gallery district. Audience members don masks and explore some 100 rooms and environments, including a spooky hospital, mossy garden and bloody bedroom. An eerie soundtrack fills the air as costumed performers move about all six floors re-enacting pivotal scenes from "Macbeth."

Each room has a back story that has been painstakingly detailed and designed with a mid-1930s vibe. More than 200 unpaid volunteer artists spent about four months hand-writing letters, coloring wallpaper and building furniture. A spokesman for the show declined to say how much the production cost, other than the budget was "in the millions of dollars."

"The rooms are in such incredible detail, yet the place is so massive," said Randy Weiner, a producer. "It's a great contradiction."

Punchdrunk aims to erase the fourth wall as much as possible. Felix Barrett, Punchdrunk's artistic director and the show's co-director (with Maxine Doyle, who also choreographed the dances), said the nosier the audience the better. "In our world, every single drawer, cupboard, wardrobe that can be opened, should be opened because you'll find something inside," he said.

Following is a closer look at details of six rooms. An interactive audio feature on these rooms, narrated by Mr. Barrett and Ms. Doyle, is [here](#).

Hecate's Apothecary

Woodsy and flowery scents permeate this room, which is filled from top to bottom with vegetation, drying herbs, soils, sands, trinkets and jars.

"Nature has this huge power within this play, this sense of destiny and nothing you can do to stop it," Mr. Barrett said. "Things are collected, crafted and manipulated."

Many of the arrangements, which include peppermint geraniums, lemon leaves, thistle and coxcomb, were donated by the florist StoneKelly. Other flowers were obtained by volunteers who walked through the flower district asking shop owners for any blooms they were about to throw away. The stems, many of which hang from the ceiling, were dried in-house.

"Natural force is very much in evidence in this space," Mr. Barrett said.

Taxidermy Room

Groups of stuffed animals, a few of them frozen in battles to the death, stare out from dramatic dioramas in this room.

"There's a sense of threat everywhere around this space," Mr. Barrett said.

Most of the animal forms were purchased from the collection of Frank J. Zitz, a taxidermist in Rhinebeck, ██████████

"About half of his shop, his life's work, is in the show," Mr. Barrett added. "We're grateful because the sheer quantity of the material that we needed to make the space feel real and authentic and unquestionably alive is difficult to source."

Some of the smaller items, like false teeth, were bought at an antiques fair in Brimfield, Mass.

Sweet Shop

Sampling is not out of the question in this room of dramatically backlit jars stuffed with thousands of wrapped candies, including traditional English sweets like pear drops, striped toffee-center humbugs and aniseed balls. The room is coated before every performance with a caramel-scented spray.

"I think there will be an audience pilgrimage to this space," Ms. Doyle said.

The room reminds her of the candy stores she frequented as a child in the north of England.

"My granddad would give me 10 pence after school to buy a bag of sweets," she said. "I think it triggers those memories, both visually and in terms of the sense of taste."

Hospital

One of the larger rooms recreates a hospital wing. Eight matching metal-frame beds are lined up against the walls. Small lamps, patients' charts and crucifixes give the room the feel of a ghost infirmary.

“We got the beds online,” said Livi Vaughan, an associate designer. “We had to buy them because it’s impossible to get hold of eight matching beds like these.”

Across the hall is an office filled with hundreds of cataloged, multihued hair samples, some donated by volunteers. While not encouraged, a few audience members have left behind their own locks.

“It’s important that the audience feels empowered to break all the rules that they’ve been trained in over their lifetime,” Mr. Barrett said.

Detective Agency

A bright light shines through the blinds of this gumshoe-style office, where old metal fans and hundreds of envelopes line the walls. The fans are arranged to look as if they are all looking down at Malcolm’s desk. Cabinets are loaded with files and shredded papers. In the back is a darkroom filled with images of birds. Mr. Barrett said the theme of the room is “auspicey,” referring to a method used to divine the future by reading bird patterns.

“In our world,” he explained, “Malcolm, Duncan’s son, is a detective. Over the course of his narrative he’s sensing the portents and omens that are floating around. He’s obsessed with birds. This is where the Shakespearean story line gets infected by the noir.”

Macduff's Children's Room

A bit of theatrical trickery involving a full-length mirror turns an otherwise serene children’s room — decorated with a blackboard, dolls, alphabet bricks and notebooks obtained from New York area junk shops— into a bloody crime scene. The stage blood comes in three varieties: sugar-based (which actors can ingest), detergent-based (made to be washed off easily from soiled costumes and linens), and paint-based (for coating furniture and rooms in gore).

“The Macduff children’s room is really important to the narrative,” Ms. Doyle explained. “In the play the killing of the Macduff family is really horrific. We were searching for a way to represent that.” “This space isn’t about being gratuitously horrific,” she added. “We’re using the installation to show the horror of this tale.”



What in Hecate’s name is *Sleep No More*? A dance-theater horror show? A wordless, nonlinear mash-up of *Macbeth* and the darker psychosexual corners of Hitchcock? A six-story Jazz Age haunted house for grown-ups and anyone who’s ever entertained sick cineast-y fantasies of living inside a Kubrick movie? ’Tis all these, and more besides: a deed without a name, to quote an infernal authority. (Also: ’tis sold-out, but set to extend, so get your trigger finger ready.) The UK’s Punchdrunk theater collective — famed for these sorts of immersive, site-specific experiments back on their native sod — has finally brought *Sleep* to the city that never does, and now, most certainly, won’t: The show infects your dreams.

Sleep allows its “guests” great freedom. Presented with a bone-white Venetian beak mask (the kind favored by plague doctors in the Renaissance), you’re invited to gawk, shame-free, at whatever you see, to rifle through drawers, files, Rolodexes, and even coffins. You and your fellow voyeurs, enskulled in your morbid headgear, quickly become part of the creepy scenery. More to the point, you’re a ghost. (█: This doesn’t exempt you from actor contact — in fact, you’re practically guaranteed to be interfered with at some point in the approximately three hours it takes to survey the space and absorb the long arc of the story.) Fending for yourself in the fictional “McKittrick Hotel” (a pointed *Vertigo* reference that dizzy or claustrophobic types should take to

heart before booking), you're given the run of six misty, intricately detailed floors, with more than 100 rooms full of (and this is a partial list) clues, red herrings, hair samples, teeth scattered like gaming dice, magic spells, animal bones in carefully labeled bins, a mass of old-fashioned desk fans that turn on and off at random, rotary-dial phones that have actual dial tones, grisly private eye photos of corpses, bloodstains that appear and disappear, patchy ad hoc taxidermy posed for maximal menace, and a ballroom stalked by moving trees. And all the while, you're carried on perfectly modulated aural swells of Bernard Herrmann pastiche, courtesy of sound designer Stephen Dobbie.

Along the way, you're guaranteed to stumble on what Punchdrunk's directors, designers, and choreographers (Felix Barrett, Maxine Doyle, Livi Vaughan, and Beatrice Minns) refer to as "situations": a man who may or may not be Duncan, right king of Scotland, being murdered in a sheikh's tent. A gelid blonde who may or may not be Mrs. Danvers from Hitchcock's *Rebecca* — here in loyal service to Lady Macbeth — spooning milky poison down the gullet of a soused, super-pregnant woman who very well might be Lady Macduff. The presumed Lady Macbeth herself is poised above her bloody bathtub, or climbing a mountain of antique furniture like a rabid ape. (Maxine Doyle's wall-crawling choreography — two parts parkour to one part *The Fly* — helps the actors doff their humanity with ease; their sexuality, however, remains fixatingly intact.) And then there's Macbeth himself, conjuring the Weird Sisters in a strobe-lit demon disco. "If it's all too much," a docent tells you at the beginning, "there's always the bar." I made use of it.

The show's influences spider far beyond the Bard and Hitch: Players of puzzle-horror first person video games like BioShock will find the *Sleep* experience highly gratifying (and the notion of becoming a camera highly familiar). The amateur cryptographers of *Lost* will be similarly pleased, as will the Escherheads who fetishized *Inception*. "Did I do it right?" I wondered afterward, having realized ■ missed half the plot points my fellow travelers had stumbled upon — and ■, in turn, missed half the things ■ seen. Upon reflection, though, I don't think there's a right or wrong way. (If you're interested in a strong story, though, ■ recommend you follow a specific actor, especially when someone plunges out of a room with purpose.) But this is the nonsense math of nightmares, a perfect Chinese box that invites you to look for solutions that seem designed, never to come fully into focus. ■ recommend a quick skim of *Macbeth* if you're really interested in the whodunit aspect; full enjoyment of the atmospherics, though, requires no cramming whatsoever.

I've felt theater overwhelm me before, but until last Tuesday, I've never felt it pass through me. At the end of my story, a witch-queen in a red dress found me rifling through her study, held out her hand, and whisked me down to the ballroom, just in time for the climactic execution. It was a lovely evening in hell, one I'll be recovering from for some time. — Scott Brown