

'The Illustrated Bradbury' at Pasadena's Fremont Theatre

Directed by CCC's David Smith-English

Jackie Houchin



Theatre Review

A boy encounters a stranger clothed tightly from chin to wrist, sweating in the heat of a summer's day. He enquires why the man does not unbutton his shirt. The stranger casts woeful eyes upon the lad and states, "You'll be sorry you asked."

So begins 'The Illustrated Bradbury,' a play inspired by Ray Bradbury's 1951 book about a man covered with animated tattoos ("in a forest of chest hair" and "peaking from arm-pit caves").

"They'll tell your future and your death," warns the man, but the boy cannot tear away his eyes as the figures come to life on the man's torso like tiny movies. Lucky for us he watches and records...

There are ten narratives in this "living anthology" selected from over 500 of the author's stories published from 1944 – 1990. They feature men and women, birds and beasts ... even a few extraterrestrials. Some of the tales tickle the funny bone; others predict doom. All are delightfully imaginative.

But what else would one expect from the master of fantasy and science fiction?

Celebrated actor Tobias Andersen performs each of these tales (18 characters in all) with such diversity the audience soon forgets it's a one-man show. In flawless, animated monologues, changing only his facial expression and physical attitude (and perhaps a hat), Anderson morphs from mad prisoner to elderly spinster to talking parrot with the ease of a magician.

In "The Murderer" a straight jacketed man tells how he systematically, and with glee, destroys the intrusive technology that controls his life. "The silence was beautiful," he claims, "after I murdered my house."

In a creepy moonlit scene, a mariner eulogizes "The Foghorn" and the beast

from the deeps that answers its mournful call.

A merry (and perhaps a wee bit tipsy) Dublin man explains his version of the Irish Olympics in "The Anthem Sprinters."

In the delightful "There Was an Old Woman," a spry old maid argues with a persistent young man carrying a wicker basket (not a specter with a scythe) that she doesn't believe in death. But the "dark thief" out waits her, and after a brief catnap, Tildy awakens to discover she's a ghost. Incensed, she grabs her umbrella and strides offstage to the mortuary to reclaim her body.

After a brief intermission, the audience is treated to a hilarious scene, in which the stubborn Tildy blackmails the mortician into returning her body. Bravo, Tobias Anderson, for that astonishingly believable performance as a feisty old lady pulling on her body like a pair of pajamas!

Anderson continues to amaze the audience in the comic-noir "The Parrot Who Met Papa," where he plays a private eye, a Cuban bartender, a gangster, a parrot and the inebriated Hemmingway. The story has a delightful and unexpected twist at the end, which he pulls off perfectly.

His monologue as Fire Captain Beatty in "Fahrenheit 451" is delivered with heat and intensity, but with a mere change of stance and expression, he easily switches to the lighthearted tomfoolery of time-traveler Stiles in "The Toynbee Convecton."

"The Illustrated Bradbury" is a perfect melding of writing and acting talent from an actor-writer relationship that goes back 30 years. With **David Smith-English's** able direction, and Ray Bradbury's many murmurs of approval of on opening night, theatergoers can be assured of an evening of outstanding entertainment.

The Los Angeles premier of "The Illustrated Man" runs Fridays & Saturdays at 8:00 pm, Sundays at 3:00 pm through March 8, 2009.

Admission is \$20 (seniors, \$15 & students, \$10). Call (323) 960-4451 for reservations.

The Fremont Centre Theatre is located at 1000 Fremont Ave, (at El Centro), South Pasadena, California, 91030. There is plenty of parking behind the theatre.

Caution: One story, "A Graveyard for Lunatics," may be religiously offensive to some.

[The American Chronicle](#), [California Chronicle](#), [Los Angeles Chronicle](#), [World Sentinel](#), and affiliates are online magazines for national, international, state, and local news. We also provide opinion and feature articles. We have over 3,500 contributors, over 100,000 articles, and over 11 million visitors annually.

This website and its affiliates have no responsibility for the views, opinions and information communicated here. The contributor(s) and news providers are fully responsible for their content. In addition, the views and opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of the American Chronicle or its affiliates. All services and information provided on this website are provided as general information only. Any medical advice, home remedies and all other medical information on this website should not be treated as a substitute for the medical advice of your own doctor. We not responsible for any diagnosis of treatment made by anyone based on any of the content of this website. Always consult your own doctor if you are in any way concerned about your health.

Copyright 2008 Ultio, LLC. Powered by Boxkite Media.