

**SYDNEY
THEATRE
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EDUCATION**

ON CUE



DRACULA

BY BRAM STOKER

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY KIP WILLIAMS

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Image: Zahra Newman. Photo: Rene Vaile

Compiled by Sophia Small.

The activities and resources contained in this document are designed for educators as the starting point for developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. You can contact the Education Team on **education@sydneytheatre.com.au**

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Sydney Theatre Company acknowledges the Gadigal of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which the Company gathers. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with whom we work and with whom we share stories.

CAST AND CREATIVES

DRACULA

BY BRAM STOKER

ADAPTED AND DIRECTED BY KIP WILLIAMS

Performer

Zahra Newman

Adapter & Director

Kip Williams

Designer

Marg Horwell

Lighting Designer

Nick Schlieper

Composer

Clemence Williams

Sound Designer

Jessica Dunn

Video Designer

Craig Wilkinson

Assistant Video

Director

Benjamin Sheen

Video Editor

Susie Henderson

Associate Director

Ian Michael

Assistant Director

Nicole Pingon

Sound Supervisor

Hayley Forward

AV Systems Designer

Callum Walker

Voice & Text Coach

Charmian Gradwell

Production Manager

Elizabeth Jenkins

Deputy Production

Manager

Julia Orlando

Stage Manager

Sarah Smith

Deputy Stage

Manager

Jaymii Knierum

Assistant Stage

Manager

Chloe Langdon

Costume Coordinator

Sam Perkins

Wig, Hair & Make-up

Supervisor

Lauren A. Proietti

Backstage Wardrobe

Supervisor

Simone Edwards

Wardrobe Day

Maintenance

Catriona McCabe

Lighting Supervisor

Jesse Grieg

Lighting Programmer

Corinne Fish

Head Lighting

Technician

Amy Robertson

Lighting Operator

Anastasia Mowen

Deputy Sound

Supervisor

Luke Davis

Sound Operator

Zac Saric

Mic Technician

Jessica Pizzinga

Video Supervisor

Michael Hedges

Deputy Video

Supervisor

Charlie Kember

Assistant Video Editor

Jake Lodder

Vision Switcher

Rose Mulcare

Focus Puller / Swing

Steadicam Operator

Josh Vellis

Camera Operators

Sam Heesen

André Morton

Lucy Parakhina

Staging

Supervisor/Head

Mechanist

David Tongs

Automation

Supervisor

Kane Mott

Automation Operator

Liam Kennedy

Fly Operator

Bernard Gourlay

Mechanists

Sam Carr

Grant Finlay

Jhett Finlay

Rehearsal

Photographer

Daniel Boud

THIS PRODUCTION OPENED AT ROSLYN PACKER THEATRE, SYDNEY ON 6 JULY 2024

ASSOCIATE PARTNER



SYNOPSIS



A danger lurks in the shadows. Whispers of a creature that is either ghost, demon, or something altogether more uncanny.

Young solicitor, Jonathan Harker, travels on business to Castle Dracula – a ruined battlement nestled deep in the wilderness. He has been sent to meet the mysterious Count, to arrange the purchase of an estate. Soon understanding he is in great danger, Jonathan attempts an escape. But the castle is a veritable prison, and he its prisoner.

At home, Jonathan's soon-to-be wife, Mina Murray, grows uneasy at his long absence. She's further troubled by a mysterious attack on her friend, Lucy Westenra. Lucy is found chalkily pale and with two punctures in her neck. The figure responsible; clad in black, with red gleaming eyes.

Meanwhile, Dr Jack Seward, the warden of a nearby psychiatric hospital, becomes fascinated by a new case: a strange patient with a fascinating danger to him, and a growing taste for blood.

Together they set out to find the author of their sorrows and stamp him out.

CURRICULUM LINKS

DRAMA

Stage 5

- Elements of Drama
- Elements of Performance
- Elements of Production

Stage 6

- Improvisation and Play building
- Dramatic Forms
- Performance Spaces and Conventions of Theatre
- Technical Aspects of Production
- Experience of Dramatic Presentations Discussion
- Reading and Writing about Drama and Theatre

ENGLISH

Stage 5

- Appropriation of a classic text
- Core Textual Concepts: Genre, Code and Convention, Perspective, Point of View, Literary Value, Context, Character

Stage 6

- Preliminary English Extension 1, 'Texts, Culture and Value'

SUITABLE FOR

Years 10 - 12

THEMES & IDEAS

- Fear and Desire
- Gender and Sexuality
- Technology and Progress

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: KIP WILLIAMS

Dracula is the final part of a trilogy of works, which began with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and continued with *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Of these three gothic texts, *Dracula* is somewhat of an outlier. While *Dorian* and *Jekyll and Hyde* are both written with a narratorial voice in third person past tense, *Dracula* is an epistolary novel, and, as such, the relationship to both character and story is markedly different. The first two novels place the reader at a critical distance from character, inviting us to observe the characters from the outside. *Dracula*, with its emphasis on diary entries, often places the reader inside the private mind of the characters, in a space where these characters are not navigating how an external audience might view their thoughts. As such, this adaptation has generated a different relationship to camera and screen from its predecessors.

In *Dorian* and *Jekyll*, the camera was an extension of the ever-observing audience/ public that watches as the actor/character curates their performance of self, allowing us to actively discern how much they are revealing or concealing. In *Dracula* the relationship to camera is more confessional, private, and conspiratorial. It takes us into the unconscious and private musings of a character, letting us witness their inner dialogue and intimate perspective, in turn, inviting us to discern not only how honest they are being with those around them, but also how honest they are being with themselves. The screen, then, becomes less a place for the public performance of self to be made manifest, and instead a psychological canvas that grants access to the subjective images of the unconscious. A place where a character can be consumed into their memory or their subconscious and then spat out by it, pressured and pursued by it. And so, as this story begins, Harker's journey to Dracula's castle is much less one of literal landscape and geography (indeed these references are all but gone), and more one of crossing or transgressing psychological boundaries as we enter his mind, its desires and how he fears them.



One key aspect of this adaptation that makes *Dracula* similar to its sibling works is the storytelling form it deploys. For all the use of contemporary technology in these works, it is a very ancient form of storytelling that motors them – that of an actor coming directly to an audience to tell them a story. The actor will undergo a certain theatrical and digital transmogrification throughout as they shift from character to character, but the audience stays connected to that storyteller in every single moment of the work in an unbroken act of story sharing. In *Dracula*, the choice of having one actor perform all the roles stems from our exploration of the idea of the ‘monster within’, the notion that the monsters we create are often a manifestation of a fear of something that actually exists within us. Much of Stoker’s story is driven by the tension between fear and desire, a tension that is present throughout the entire novel, though perhaps is most obviously expressed in the erotic first encounter with the trio of vampire brides. Having one performer play all the roles generates a form that, amongst other ideas, allows our vampire to emerge from within each character at any given moment. In a telling of this story that is interested in entering into the unconscious, our vampire is one that exists most presently in the psychological landscape. As for the way our telling of this story and its ideas unfold, I shall leave that for you to discover in the watching.

The actor at the centre of this work is one in possession of the greatest of gifts, both in acting and theatre-making – Zahra Newman. It is beyond inspiring to work with Zahra, and it has been a privilege to collaborate with her on this work and, indeed, on so many special pieces together over the last decade of our careers. It’s also a joy and privilege to be working with such an incredible creative team and crew on this show, so many of whom I’ve worked with across not only this trilogy, but also my entire time at Sydney Theatre Company. It is a bittersweet moment to be launching *Dracula* into the world. On one hand, this production celebrates the culmination of the hard work, dedication, and talent of so many fantastic Australian arts workers; artists, production crews and workshops, producers, administrators, front-of-house, box office staff, and beyond. On the other hand, this is the final production I will make during my tenure as Artistic Director. I love this company so dearly and my time leading it has been the honour of a lifetime. While my connection with and passion for STC will continue, this production acts as somewhat of a punctuation mark to one significant chapter. And so I take this opportunity to express my deepest thanks to everyone that I have had the great privilege to work with during my time at STC, to all those who have supported what we do on so many levels, and to you, our audience, who I will forever be indebted to for your love of sharing stories in our theatres.

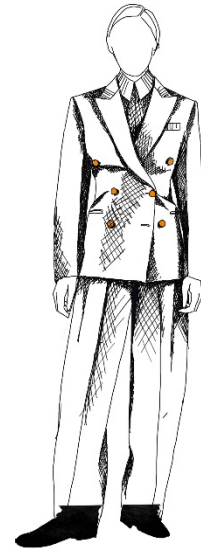


CHARACTER ANALYSIS

The following character analysis is based on the original Bram Stoker *Dracula*. Once students have seen the production, you can revisit the descriptions and the classroom activities with a new lens to compare the original and the adaptation.

Jonathan Harker

British law clerk Jonathan Harker is the protagonist of *Dracula*, whose journey from naive gentleman to vampire hunter reflects the story's exploration of innocence confronted by the monstrous unknown. Initially depicted as a diligent and rational solicitor, Harker's sense of order and professionalism is tested when he travels to a foreign country to assist Count Dracula with a real estate transaction. His meticulous journal entries reflect his methodical nature, but as he uncovers Dracula's true identity and malevolent plans, his initial scepticism gives way to sheer terror, and he must join forces with Mina and their gang of vampire-hunters to save the world from the dark and monstrous forces.



**Costume design for Harker in *Dracula*
(Costume Sketch: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)**

Mina

Arguably the real hero of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is Jonathan Harker's fiancé, Wilhelmina 'Mina' Murray, who is responsible for maintaining the archive that makes up the story of *Dracula*. Initially introduced as a paragon of Victorian womanhood — devoted, nurturing, and virtuous — Mina undergoes a transformative journey as she becomes entangled in Dracula's machinations. Mina is beloved by all who meet her, and her skills in shorthand and understanding of newly developed technology is invaluable in the fight against the forces of evil. Despite being victimised by Dracula's vampiric curse, Mina shows remarkable strength and determination, actively participating in the pursuit and eventual defeat of the vampire. Her role as a central figure in the battle against evil highlights her agency and resourcefulness, challenging traditional gender norms and expectations.



**Costume design for Mina in *Dracula*
(Costume Sketch: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)**

Lucy

Lucy Westenra undergoes the greatest transformation we see of any character in *Dracula*: she is introduced to us in an exchange of letters between her and Mina, in which she recounts a series of marriage proposals she has received. In this first impression Lucy is portrayed as fanciful and innocent. After her encounter with Count Dracula, she falls ill and receives several blood transfusions from her fiancée Arthur, and friend Dr Jack Seward, though these fail to stop her death and transformation into an undead being who roams the streets of London at night, preying on others as the Count did to her. Like the Count, Lucy uses this new relationship with desire to lure and confuse the men around her: even after her transformation Arthur finds himself drawn to her despite her new dangerous nature.

Jack Seward

Dr Jack Seward's diary entries join the structure of the story after Harker's return to London. He recounts Lucy's rejection of his marriage proposal, and his time as the warden of a mental asylum in London. Jack's perspective is marked as more scientific, his diary entries being shorter and more frequent with a more clinical tone than the other characters. His descriptions of the patient Renfield and his time caring for Lucy after her encounter with Count Dracula reveal him as a more curious viewpoint, and he becomes somewhat of an unwitting secondary protagonist as he and Van Helsing try to save Lucy, and then as he joins the men as a hunter of the vampires.



Zahra Newman as Jack Seward (live) and Lucy Westenra (pre-recorded)

Dracula

Bram Stoker's Dracula is portrayed as a complex and enigmatic figure, simultaneously seductive and terrifying, who preys upon the vulnerabilities and desires of his victims. With his aristocratic charm and supernatural powers, Dracula exerts a magnetic pull on those around him, drawing them into his dark and mysterious world. But beneath this facade of sophistication lies a primal and insatiable thirst for blood, symbolising the eternal struggle between life and death, desire, and fear. The character of Dracula serves as a compelling embodiment of primal fears and forbidden desires, epitomizing the timeless allure of the vampire mythos. In this production, Dracula is non-gendered, and Dracula may be one or many characters. Once students have seen the production you can re-visit this character analysis and explore how Dracula is portrayed in more depth.



Zahra Newman

FORM, STYLE AND CONVENTION

Form

This adaptation of *Dracula* is a work of 'cine-theatre': the blending of live performance with cinema on stage. The narrative structure of this adaptation of *Dracula* closely follows that of the original novel, with the actor in tension with the screen which allows for an investigation into the inner workings of the characters, revealing a nightmarish interrogation of self.

Style

Monologue

A monologue is a performance by one actor. It can be the performance of a long piece of dialogue within a play, or a production such as *Dracula*, that contains only one actor playing a range of distinct roles. These roles are created through a combination of live performance, live-streamed video, and pre-recorded video.

The creation of characters in *Dracula* uses the technique of transformational acting, in which one actor transforms instantly between characters/roles. Actors change their movement, gesture, physicality, facial expressions, voice, pace, and energy as part of this process. Additionally, the use of the Elements of Production, including props and costume can aid the actor to create this change for the audience.

Gothic Horror

The production recreates elements of gothic from the original novel, using a stark contrast between darkness and light to represent the tension between good and evil, natural, and unnatural, the safety of the day and the danger of the night. Costuming and set design reflect the supernatural and macabre and utilise the architecture of the theatre to create key gothic elements from the novel including Count Dracula's castle and his earth-filled coffins.

Theatricality

The production foregrounds the act of theatre-making and cinema for the audience, highlighting the relationship between the characters' inner and outer worlds through screens. These directorial choices allow the play to explore the idea of the vampire as a manifestation of elements of the self which create anxiety and fear, suggesting that the monster is within us all. The director doesn't hide the mechanisms of the cinematic techniques, making the audience part of the world behind the camera while simultaneously watching the transformation of live performance into video.

THEMES AND IDEAS

Fear and Desire

“There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips.”

Jonathan Harker, *Dracula*

Intertwined themes of fear and desire permeate the narrative of *Dracula*, underscoring the complex psychology of both the characters and society at large. *Dracula* explores the primal fears of the unknown, mortality, and sexual taboo, represented by the menacing figures of the three vampire women and of Count Dracula himself. The Count embodies the allure of forbidden desires, captivating victims with promises of eternal life and forbidden pleasures while instilling paralyzing terror. The characters' simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from Dracula symbolises the duality of human nature, where the allure of the unknown and the forbidden often coexist with deep-seated fears.

Discussion Question

This production explores how fear manifests inside of us all: how do you fight the fear of the monster if it is a part of you? When watching the production take note of moments that highlight themes of fear and liberation: how do the characters free themselves, and from what?



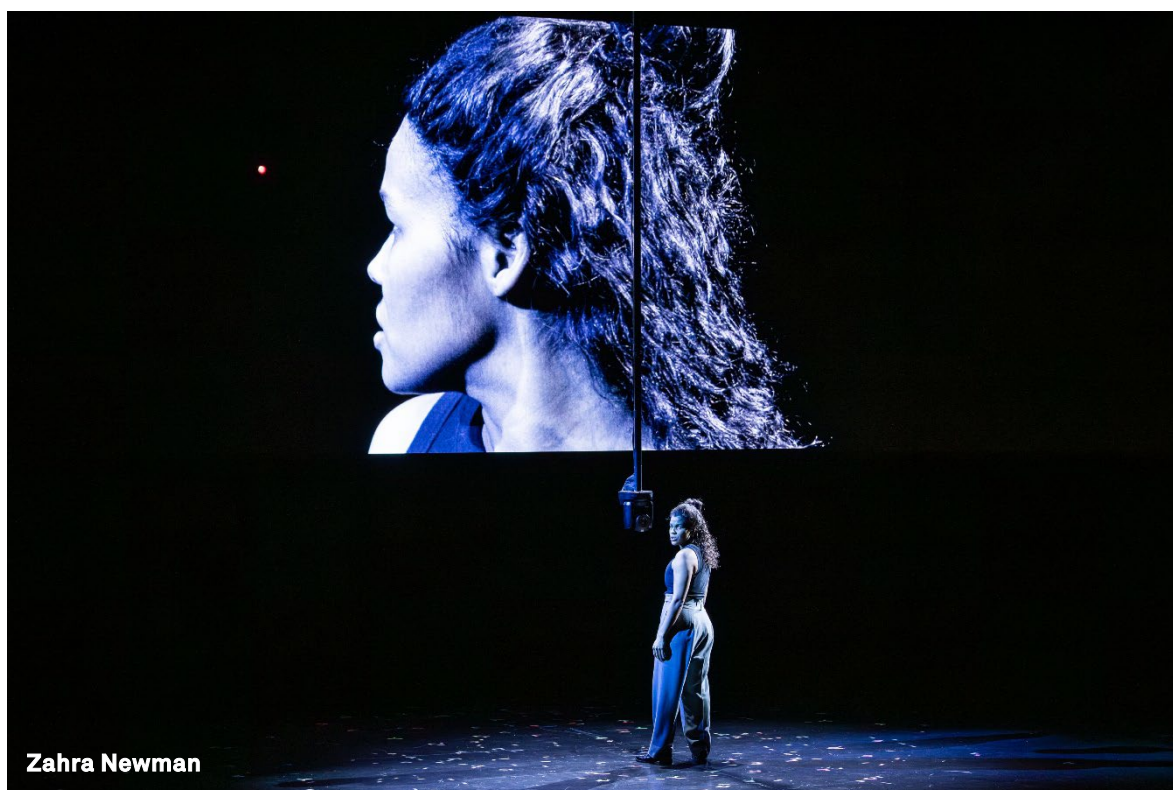
Gender and Sexuality

Gender and sexuality in *Dracula* are central themes that challenge and subvert the rigid norms of late-Victorian society. Stoker portrays women like Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker in complex ways, contrasting their roles as pure, virtuous figures with their potential for sexual transgression under Dracula's influence. Lucy's transformation into a vampire and her subsequent portrayal as a sexually aggressive figure reflect Victorian anxieties about female sexuality and the fear of women breaking free from traditional roles. Similarly, Mina's struggle against Dracula's influence highlights the era's conflict between women's emerging independence and the desire to maintain patriarchal control. The three vampire women, who tempt Jonathan Harker even as they terrify him, represent the risk to Victorian men of unrestrained female sexuality and its ability to corrupt otherwise good men.

The fluid and predatory sexuality of Dracula, who preys on both men and women, destabilizes the conventional gender boundaries of the times, suggesting a fear of uncontrolled sexual desire and the breakdown of established social and gender hierarchies. "The underlying fear in *Dracula*," writes Nicole Tota, "is the fear that English society might become free from Victorian gender boundaries--and not know it until it is too late."

Technology and Progress

The themes of technology and progress are central to the narrative of *Dracula*, contrasting the modernity of the late 19th century with ancient supernatural forces. The novel showcases the use of contemporary advancements such as the typewriter, phonograph, shorthand, telegram, and medical practices such as the blood transfusion, highlighting the characters' reliance on these technologies to combat Dracula's archaic and mystical powers. This juxtaposition underscores the Victorian belief in progress and rationality, suggesting that modern science and technology can triumph over ancient evils. However, Stoker warns against progress for its own sake. Harker and the Crew of Light cannot beat Dracula with technology and science alone – they must rely on the traditional wisdom of Van Helsing, the moral compass of Christianity, and the love they have for one another to ensure that vampires are vanquished for good.



CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Reflection questions

After viewing the performance, discuss as a class:

- Revisit the character analysis above. What has changed? How has your perception of the characters and the relationship between protagonist/antagonist changed?
- Did you think that Dracula was multiple characters or one character? What do you think Dracula represents?
- As a class look over the resources for previous productions in the Kip Williams Gothic Trilogy:

The Picture of Dorian Gray

Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde

What links Kip Williams' Gothic Trilogy together? (if students have seen the previous productions). How is identity explored in all three plays (or this play) and through different mediums? Catalogue the unique ways technology was used in each show.

- Did you know that Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker knew each other? Could you see any hints of this relationship in the production? Any parallels between their real lives? Have students research their relationship.

Gender and Sexuality

1. As a class, discuss the impact that the casting of Zahra Newman as all characters has on the theme of gender and sexuality. How did having a non-gendered Dracula add to, shape, or change your experience of this classic vampire story? How would the meaning have changed if this had been a male performer?
2. **Creative Writing:** In pairs, students rewrite a scene from *Dracula* with gender-swapped, non-binary, or gender fluid characters, altering the gender identities of key figures like Dracula, Mina, Lucy, or Van Helsing. Encourage students to consider how changing the gender dynamics of the scene affects the themes of the story, particularly regarding power dynamics, societal expectations, and relationships. Afterwards, each pair of students can share their rewritten scenes and discuss the implications of their changes with the whole class or with other pairs.
3. Individually, or in pairs, create a character profile for one of the gender-swapped characters, including physical appearance, character backstory, personality traits, and costuming.

Technology and Progress

1. In pairs, students brainstorm ideas for their own adaptation of *Dracula* that includes contemporary technology such as social media, smartphones, or AI.
2. In small groups, students devise a 1–2-minute monologue from the perspective of Dracula, that attempts to maintain the central elements of the character while shedding light on the character's memories, motivations, or desires. Using [Flip](#) or similar, students record and post their monologues.
 - Afterwards, students view and respond to the monologues produced by their classmates, focusing on the question: what new elements were revealed about the character?
 - Individually, students write generatively in response to the question: how would the story be different, if it were told from the perspective of Dracula?

3. Either by hand or using digital media, students create a fictional one-page print-out from their character's Instagram page that reflects that character's narrative arc.
4. Watch Zahra Newman's [interview](#) about the production.
 - Discuss how the cine-theatre form of one actor performing in both pre-recorded and live performance sections elevated aspects of the story.
 - Brainstorm moments from the production Zahra might be referencing when she talks about the form of cine-theatre highlighting the psychology of the characters.
 - Create a mood board of stills from classic horror films: students reflect on identifiable tropes of this genre.
 - Have students choose three images from the mood board and create a three-line story based on these images. Have students rearrange the order of their chosen three and write a new story based on this new structure. Students reflect on how the structure of their images changes the themes of their story.

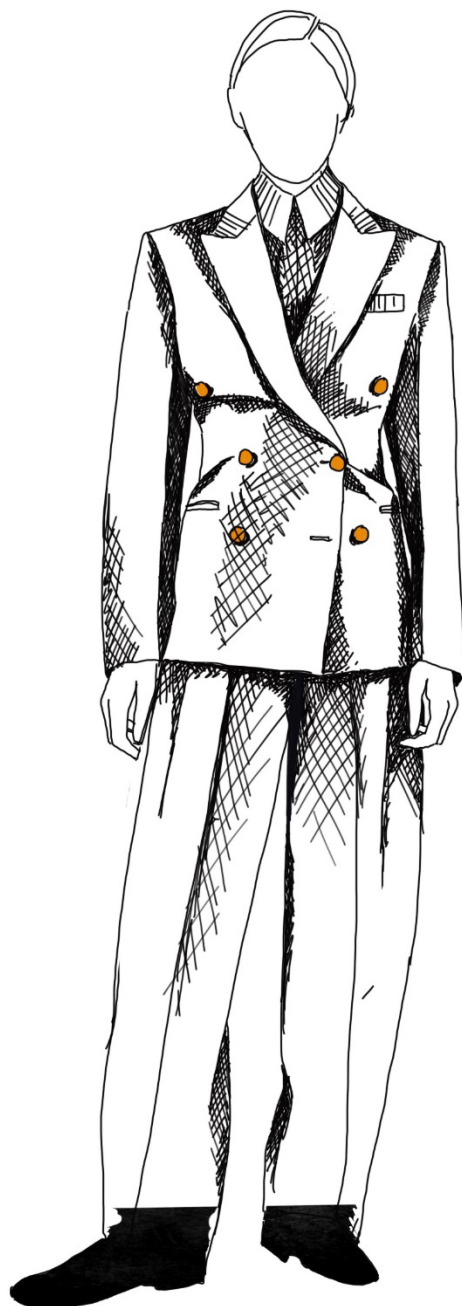
Fear and Desire

1. **Hot Seat:** split the class into groups of 4, allocating one character per group (Mina, Jonathan, Dracula, Van Helsing, Dr Seward). Each group brainstorms the fears and desires of their allocated character and nominates one student to take on the role of the character for a whole-class hot-seat activity, where they answer questions from the class about their motivations, fears, and desires, in character.
2. Using the character they brainstormed in groups, students write a series of diary entries that explore a key scene from the play from the perspective of their character, reflecting on their day.



APPENDIX: DESIGN SKETCHBOOK

COSTUME DESIGN



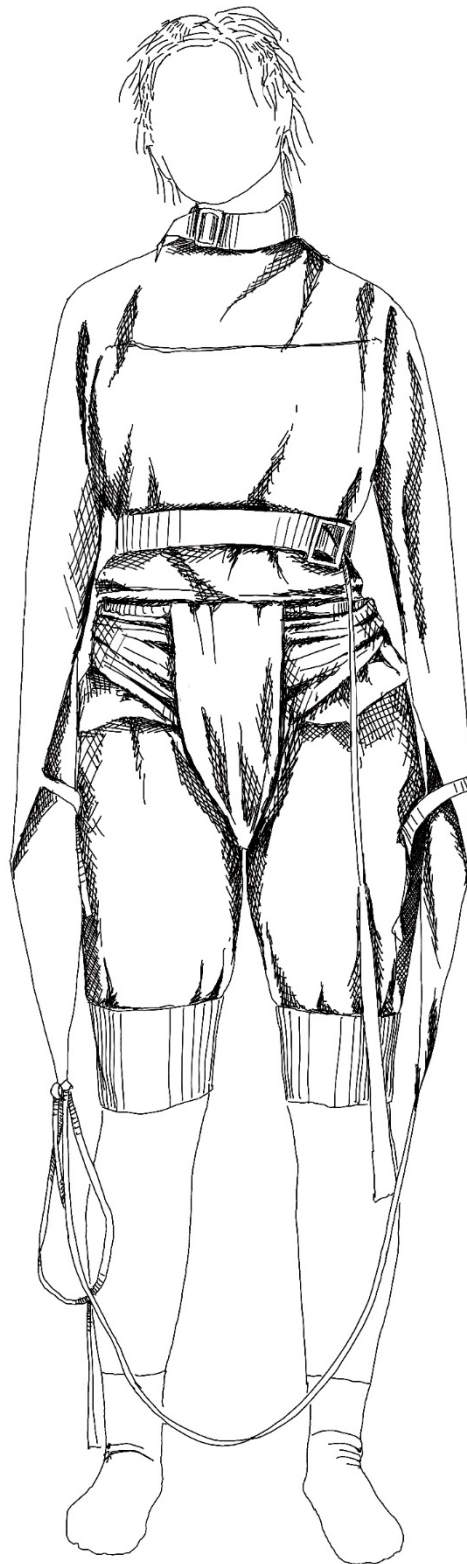
Costume design for Harker in *Dracula* (Costume Sketch: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)



Costume design for Mina in *Dracula* (Costume Sketch: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)



Costume design for Mina in *Dracula* (Costume Sketch: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)



Costume design for Renfield in *Dracula* (Costume Sketch: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)



Costume design for Quincy in *Dracula* (Costume Sketch: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)



Costume design mood boards for *Dracula* (Marg Horwell 2024)

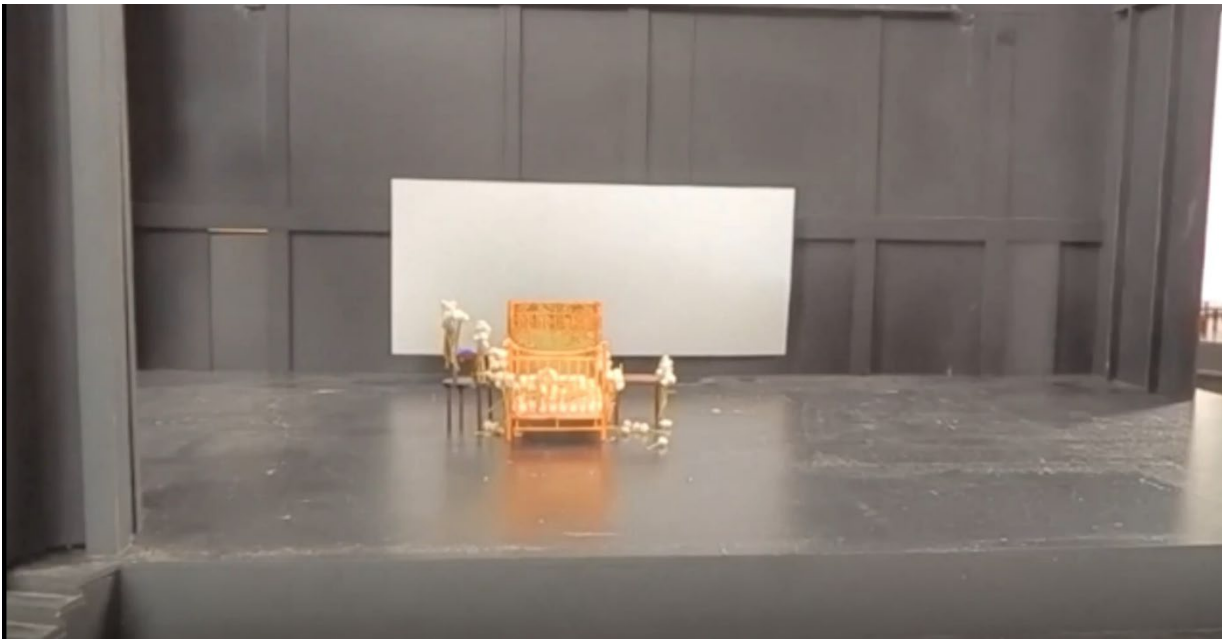
SET DESIGN



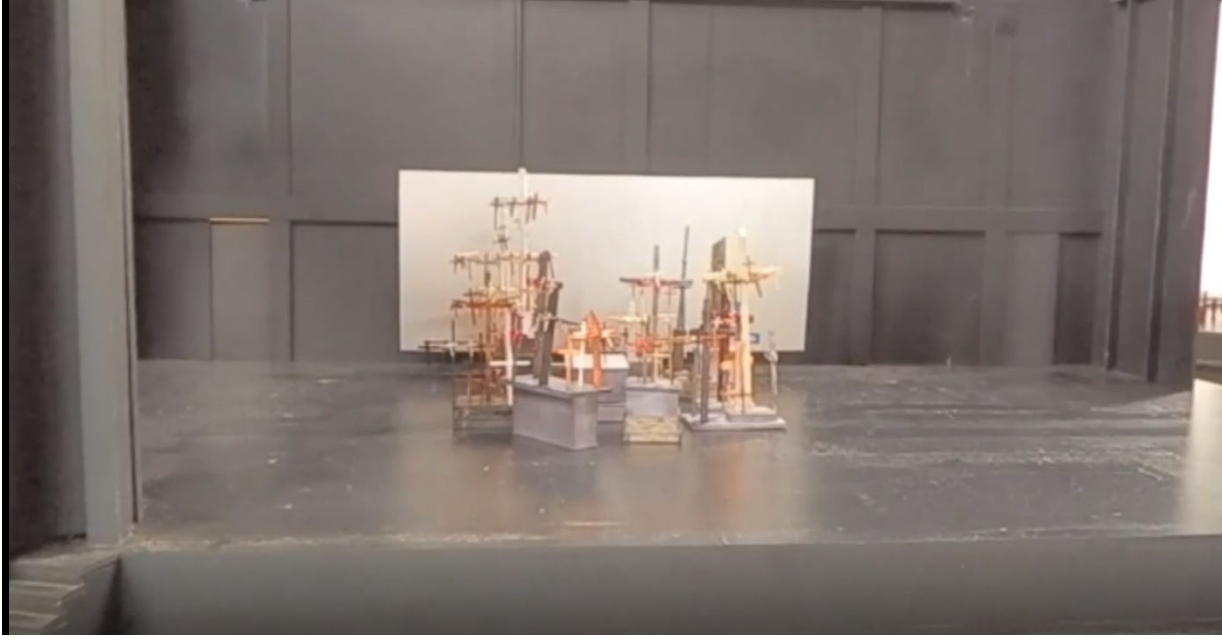
Set design for *Dracula* (Model Box: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)



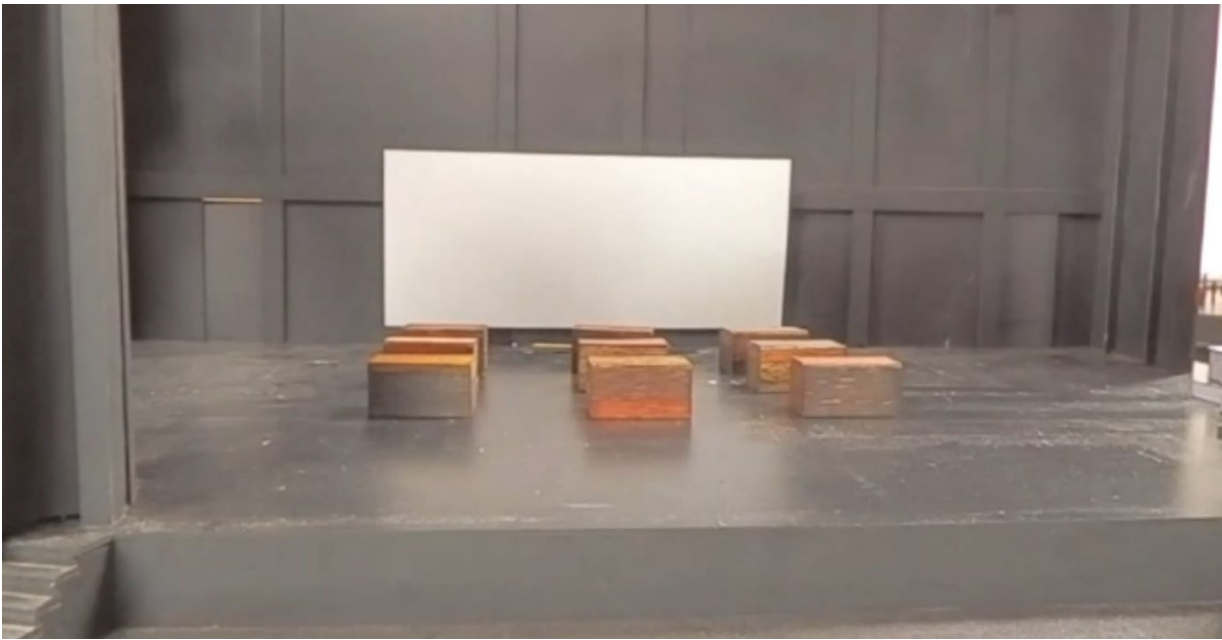
Set design for *Dracula* (Model Box: Marg Horwell 2024 ©)



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