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## Dragon weaves ghostly tale with 'The Woman in Black'

October 17, 2014, 05:00 AM By [Judy Richter](#) Daily Journal

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There's nothing quite like a good ghost story around Halloween. Dragon Theatre has such a story in "The Woman in Black," which Stephen Mallatratt adapted from a book by Susan Hill.

The plot features an older man, Arthur Kipps (Kevin Kirby), who hires a younger actor (Tasi Alabastro) to help him exorcise a ghost, the Woman in Black (Lessa Bouchard in this nonspeaking role), that he encountered many years ago.

When he was a young solicitor, Kipps' boss sent him to a remote village north of London to attend the funeral of a client, a reclusive widow, and go through her personal papers.

Upon arriving in the village, Kipps finds people reluctant to talk about the late Mrs. Drablow and her house, Eel Marsh, reachable only at low tide. At the funeral and again at the house, Kipps sees a mysterious woman in black with a wasted face.

Over time, he learns her chilling story and later falls victim to her curse.

Director Meredith Hagedorn has made the unusual choice of having Kipps rather than the Actor reenact Kipps' story, while the Actor plays most of the characters that Kipps encounters.

In other productions, the Actor plays the younger Kipps, while the older Kipps plays the other characters.

Hence, there's some confusion about who's who in the early scenes, but the director's choice is more suited to her two actors.

Kirby as Kipps believably navigates the character's emotional journey from relative nonchalance to abject terror.

Alabastro as the Actor seems less versatile. He's also misdirected in some scenes, especially when he portrays Kipps' pipe-smoking, lip-smacking boss.

The story unfolds on the stage of a Victorian theater in London. Set designer Janny Coté furnishes it with a steamer trunk, a chair and two coat racks.

Imagination and the characters' ingenuity provide almost everything else, except for lighting by Jeff Swan, sound by Lance Huntley and costumes by Erin Haney.

"The Woman in Black" has been running in London's West End since 1989, making it the district's second-longest non-musical play, second only to Agatha Christie's "The Mousetrap."

Despite some shortcomings, this production helps to show why the play remains so popular.

It will continue at Dragon Theatre, 2120 Broadway, Redwood City, through Nov. 2. For tickets and information call (650) 493-2006 or visit [www.dragonproductions.net](http://www.dragonproductions.net).



Lessa Bouchard, Kevin Kirby and Tasi Alabastro star in 'The Woman in Black.'

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