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[HOUND howls on the NYC stage](#)

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HOUND, a new stage adaptation of the classic Sherlock Holmes novel THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, will stalk New York City as part of the Planet Connections Theatre Festivity at 440 Theaters (440 Lafayette Street between Astor Place and East 4th Street) June 9-28. Written by John Patrick Bray, the new production, director Rachel Klein says, “is a dark and twisted retelling of the Holmes mythos.

“In HOUND,” she continues. “Watson is a man dealing with the death of his wife. He has suffered a major blow as a doctor: He could not cure her. Furthermore, Sherlock Holmes has come bouncing back into his life after faking his own death and taking a three-year hiatus. Enter a case involving a hound of hell, and Watson is convinced that something has to exist in the afterlife—something that can take him to his dead wife.”



Bray's inspiration for tackling the famous and oft-filmed story was a simple suggestion from a friend. "I wrote HOUND after reading a couple of Neal Bell's plays, TWO SMALL BODIES and MONSTER [the latter an adaptation of FRANKENSTEIN]," he says. "Neal was one of my teachers, and has become a very close friend. I had also been rereading Hound of the Baskervilles, and Neal suggested I try to adapt it. At first, I thought I was going to write the most faithful adaptation to date. Instead, all of these 'issues' kept coming out: molestation, incest, abuse, the separation of economic classes and a grief that exists beyond hellish imagination."

This led to some fairly interesting twists regarding its ensemble. "A number of character types—the maids, the butlers, the boy in the street—usually protected by who they are in detective novels as justice always prevails, are now damned by what they are," Bray notes. "Each relates a personal trauma to the audience, expressing why they are trapped into doing what they do. Watson, meanwhile, has the Dr. Dolittle ability to communicate with dogs. We see him with two of them early on, which sets up the showdown between Watson and the hound of hell. Also, as I reread the book, I felt like Sir Arthur Conan Doyle let too many people off the hook. In my version, a few more leading characters die. And the ones who make it out alive may have been better off if they hadn't."

HOUND's director has quite a diverse past in the theater and was a big fan of Bray's vision, which worked out, as he actively pursued her for the top position. "I really love to work with existing genres or cultural memories and expand upon them," Klein says. "I recently directed and choreographed Sean Gill's GO-GO KILLERS!, a postapocalyptic show about teenage gang debs running all the organized crime. Last year I directed a film noir piece, ALL KINDS OF SHIFTY VILLAINS, and a grindhouse-style double feature of horror/thriller plays.

"The presentation of HOUND is on a stark, empty stage, with costumes that fuse traditional period with Brechtian cabaret," she continues. "The design illustrates the nightmarish tone of Watson's journey, which is theatrical, and almost existential." Bray adds that there's an underlying string of truly black humor running through HOUND. "To top it all off, it's almost a comedy," he says. "Almost."

HOUND'S playdates at the festival are Wednesday, June 17 at 6 p.m.; Saturday, June 20 at 7 p.m.; Monday, June 22, Tuesday, June 23 and Wednesday, June 24, all at 6:30 p.m.; and finally, Thursday, June 25 at 4 p.m. For more info and to grab tickets (only \$18), head over to the event's [official website](#).