The Indiana Repertory Theatre
Study Guide

prepared for

Dracula

adapted for the stage by

Tom Haas

From the novel by
Bram Stoker

directed by

Gavin Cameron-Webb

Set designed by
Alison Ford

Lighting designed by
Rachel Budin

Costumes designed by
Gail Brassard

Guide compiled by
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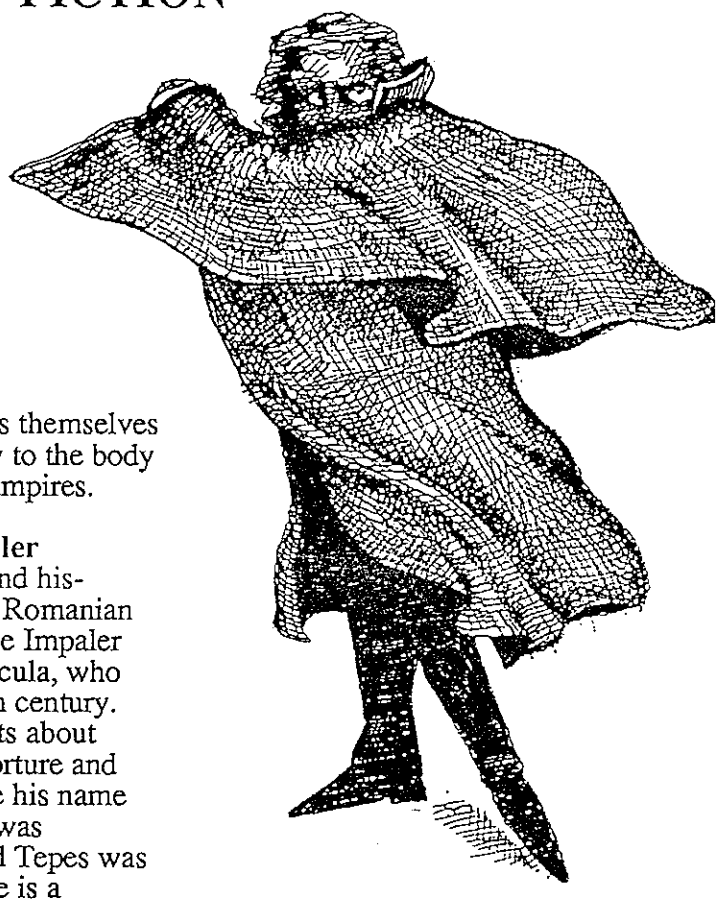
DRACULA IN FACT AND FICTION



Of monsters, famous or infamous -- Cyclops, Dr. Jekyll's Mr. Hyde, the Phantom of the Opera, King Kong, the Hunchback of Notre Dame, Frankenstein's creature --of them all , the one who reigns in enormity is Count Dracula.

The vampire Dracula first appears in Bram Stoker's novel. Published in 1897, Dracula is as popular now as when it was first written. Millions have not only read it but seen it onstage or at the cinema. Among the film versions are *Nosferatu,* made with Max Schreck in a silent version in 1922, *Dracula* with Bela Lugosi in 1931, and *Horror of Dracula* with Christopher Lee in 1958. The stage version, orginally done in the 1920's, can be seen somewhere in the United States nearly year-round.

Ancient Allegories

Dracula is a horror tale in which there is plenty of that fearful, grisly, wonderful and sometimes silly stuff that we count on finding in our blood-and-gore entertainment. On the other hand, there rises from it images so dreamlike and yet so imperative that we experience them as ancient allegories. Everywhere one looks there flickers the shadows of primordial struggles: the perpetual tension between the dark and the light, the wrestling match between Christ and Satan, and finally, the complex allegories of sex. And all these urgencies are seen or sensed through a hot wash of blood which, deny it though we will, fascinates us very nearly to the point of shame.

Stoker's Dracula, which forms the base for the stage adaptation written by Artistic Director Tom Haas and presented on the IRT Mainstage this month, is a shrewd combination of myth and historical fact. Stoker delighted in collecting vampire legends from all over the world, and the Victorian writers themselves contributed significantly to the body of work pertaining to vampires.

Vlad Tepes, the Impaler

Stoker's twist was to find historical evidence about a Romanian war lord, Vlad Tepes, the Impaler also known as Vlad Dracula, who actually lived in the 15th century. Several documented facts about Vlad Tepes' delight in torture and killing led Stoker to take his name for the Vampire tale he was creating. Although Vlad Tepes was not a vampire (in fact, he is a Romanian national hero), Stoker borrowed several incidents from the war lord's geneology to use in constructing his vampire Count. This merging of folklore with authentic history lends Stoker's tale the texture of something long known or naturally remembered.

Science vs. Folklore

Stoker's tale and Haas' stage adaptation capitalize upon the growing faith in scientific proof which characterized late Victorian thinking. Advancement in scientific discovery was revolutionizing man's understanding of his world, and the belief that all things might, in time, be explained through the logic of science seemed an attainable goal. Into this world comes an unexplainable phenomenon - the peculair death of Dr. Seward's niece - and the accompanying frustration to the rational men in the play provides much of the early conflict in Dracula. The possibility that the explanation for this death might come from the irrational superstitions of folklore nearly blinds Doctors Seward and Van Helsing to the imminent danger posed by Dracula.

Dracula is both hero and anti-hero, glamorous and deadly. He both repels and attracts. These opposing forces have no doubt contributed to sustaining the Dracula story onstage and in film. His ability to transform himself into a bat, a wolf, a mist give him magic potential that in some way touches all our fantasies to fly, to disappear, to change. The key to Dracula's popularity and his intense magnetism onstage is contained in mankind's secret desire to flirt with danger -- and to live eternally.

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DRACULA:
An Unvanquished Myth

Notes from the Director

by Gavin Cameron-Webb

15th century woodcarving of Vlad Tepes, a blood-thirsty Romanian warlord whose nickname "Dracula" (meaning "devil") inspired Stoker's story.

DRACULA is one of those legends that reinforces our fascination with evil. This is a fairly traditional concept -one as old, at least, as the Antichrist and one that has followed us through the ages. George Bernard Shaw in his mischievous way, took the idea a logical step further and in his play MAN AND SUPERMAN, imagined the opposite: a totally boring heaven. One could even argue that the classification of sex as a sin has only enhanced its glamour! I mention it only because sex seems to have a great deal to do with vampirism, at least symbolically.

Tom has written a script that is rich in characterization and conflict. This is a huge bonus for a director and one that adds much to our rehearsal process. In addition he has brought the period of the play to bear upon the action and the characters. The year is 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The British Empire was at its zenith and the focus of the society was on the glory and ascendancy of British rule, so much so that the commentaries by Charles Dickens and others on the appalling filth and squalor of the time seem curiously unrelated and almost irrelevant. The accent is unmistakably on progress and achievement: political, economic, scientific, industrial and military. Such a society would tend to breed, amongst its members, an almost arrogant self-assurance and a resulting conviction that anything can be accomplished with skill and hard work.

As the play opens, this conviction has been severely shaken for Dr. Seward through the unexplained death of his neice. There is a mystery here, and Science abhors mysteries as much as nature abhors a vacuum.

The British self-esteem is not helped by the appearance of a foreign professor who seems to know more about the case than he shoud, and who wraps his theories in the arcane superstitions of folklore. Such circumstances set the stage for a favourite late 19th century conflict: Science vs. Art, or Science vs. Nature. The conflict, which is a fundamental one, can be expressed in any number of ways: Pragmatism vs. Romanticism, Deduction vs. Intuition, Observation vs. Perception. I believe that there is a modern theory that holds our personalities are balanced between these extremes, so that the resulting tension forms our personalities.

Victorian England was one of those periods when this conflict was particularly fierce. The balance between these two extreme attitudes to our universe shifts continually. The idea of either attitude gaining complete ascendancy is an anathema. While we started our existence, both as children and as a race, in a world of complete mystery and have spent much of our time unravelling the riddles and explaining the puzzles of our world, it seems to me, for whatever reason that we need a sense of mystery in our lives. It is here, that myth serves one of its basic functions, for the discoveries and theories of science march inexorably on. At times, and I think that the late 19th century was one of those times, there is a belief that there is no mystery- in other words there is nothing that cannot be explained and controlled. Indeed, the very idea that a phenomenon can remain unexplained and unknown is an affront. It is just such an obstacle that Van Helsing must overcome in the first act of the play when he proposes the existence of vampires- a proposition that is ludicrous to the scientist in Seward and an insult to the innate sense of British superiority felt by Harker. That Van Helsing can accept such mystery may be attributed to his Catholicism. In any case, it serves him well as the natural leader.

It is interesting to note how the play ends. The Vampire is vanquished but not explained. The myth survives intact. Perhaps, indeed, the victory is merely temporary and we should be on our guard. ■

Vampires appear in many different cultures: illustration from Varney the Vampire (1847).

DRACULA: *As Christian Allegory*

by Janet Allen

Van Helsing raised his arms as if appealing to the whole universe. "God, God!" he said, "What have we done, what has this poor thing done that we are sore beset? How are all the powers of the devils against us?" Suddenly he jumped to his feet. "Come," he said come, we must see and act. Devil or no devils, or all the devils at once, it matters not; we fight him all the same."

Bram Stoker's novel DRACULA has inspired innumerable spin-offs and adaptations. Many of the most recent tend to debunk the legend by cartooning the vampire Count and ignoring the serious issues which Stoker posed so provocatively in the novel. While mounting the play, we have re-examined many of these deeper concerns contained in the novel and script, and found that the central image of Dracula as the Anti-Christ pervades many levels of meaning with considerable dramatic effect. Implicit in the passage from the novel quoted above is a central question in the Christian ethos: does God send evil to the world to punish us for our sins, or does evil exist in the world so that mankind may redeem itself by vanquishing it? This question is debated in the play through the existence and perpetuation of Dracula.

To those of us accustomed to thinking of Dracula merely as a pop anti-hero, these speculations may seem unduly weighty. After all, the major Christian images in the story are fairly straightforward: the use of the Crucifix and the Host to ward off the vampire as so familiar to us through late-night movie-watching as to have almost lost their Christian significance. The fact that these Christian symbols are used interchangeably with garlic, branches of wild rose and numerous other pagan remedies, tend to encourage us to think the whole thing rather harmlessly silly. But on closer examination, the Dracula story serves as a metaphor for the disguise and dissemination of evil of all kinds in the world. The Catholic scientist Van Helsing becomes cast in the role of exorcist, Lucy and Renfield as variant forms of the possessed victim, and Dracula himself as a smiling and very tempting Satan.

One of the most fascinating elements in this investigation is the extent to which the character of Dracula is made to appear almost holy: as Van Helsing says in the novel, "It is not the least of its terrors that this evil thing is rooted deep in all good, for in soil barren of holy memories is cannot rest." Dracula in fact uses many Christian sacraments to his own foul ends, thus perverting their holy purposes and spreading damnation rather than salvation: the vampire rejuvenates itself by sleeping in dirt which was once blessed; the vampire's ability literally to rise from the dead is a perversion of Jesus' resurrection; when the vampire introduces his victims to blood-drinking this figurative baptism in blood perverts the Christian concept of being "washed in the blood of the lamb" leading to salvation: Dracula's victims are being baptized in the blood of Satan.

Dracula is literally the Devil quoting scripture. He uses "the blood is the life" from Deuteronomy 12:23 to justify vampirism; the actual Biblical passage goes on to forbid man to consume blood. As Dracula seduces Lucy he again quotes scripture for his own purposes: "Flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood," thus perverting the Catholic marriage ceremony. Were these blasphemous acts not sufficient, several other facts of its lore assure us that the vampire is damned: the invisibility of the vampire in the mirror serves the larger Christian allegory of the absence of the soul in the Undead; the burn made on Ludy's forehead by the Host leaves her with a mark of Cain, God's outcast; the Faustian image of selling one's soul to the Devil to receive eternal life is implicit in every aspect of the story. Renfield becomes cast as an Anti-John-the-Baptist to Dracula's Anti-Christ, and in one place in the play calls himself a modern Enoch, for Enoch walked with God. The potency of Dracula's evil is made greater by these perversions of Christian practice.

Van Helsing's investigation into vampirism becomes more than a mythical Holy Crusade: Seward, Harker and Van Helsing may be seen as chivalric knights, pledged to the heroic deed of vanquishing the vampire and saving Mina and Lucy from damnation. Their crusade may not take them through dangerous terrain geographically, but it does lead them through a difficult philosophic landscape, for in order to actively pursue the vampire they must first overcome their disdain for things pagan or irrational. The intellect and urbanity of these men nearly causes them to overlook the potency of Dracula's evil merely because it cannot be scientifically documented. For this reason, Dracula is truly a parable for our times too, for as Van Helsing posits in the novel:

Oh, if such a one was to come from God, and not the Devil, what a force for good might he be in this old world of ours. Our toil must be in silence, and our efforts all in secret; for in this enlightened age, when men believe not even what they see, the doubting of wise men would be his greatest strength.

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IN THE WINGS

Mainstage

Dracula

JANUARY 3-25

In 1897 Bram Stoker sounded a universal chord of fantasy and romantic anxiety which has endured for over 80 years when he published his novel Dracula. The subsequent years have yielded movies, plays, TV series, comic books, T-shirts, masks, even breakfast cereal, inspired by the legendary Dracula.

IRT's Artistic Director Tom Haas has capitalized on Stoker's considerable literary achievement in his stage adaptation of Dracula which premieres on the Mainstage on January 3, 1986. Unlike many of the other existing stage versions of this famous story, Haas' adaptation seeks to maintain the Victorian aura of Gothic romance, while others have attempted to update the tale through comic send-up or cartoon conceptualization.

IRT's upcoming production will be steeped in authentic Victorian intrigue—Stoker's own fascination with Egyptology is represented in Dr. Seward's collection of ancient tomb memorabilia; the lunatic asylum inmate Renfield provides a glimpse of the late Victorian preoccupation with Freudian psychology; Jonathan Harker offers us a taste of the typical British Empire builder. And of course the flapping of wings, the howling of dogs, and the famous caped figure evoke the essence of Dracula himself.

The well-known battle between good and evil rages onstage in this masterful combination of history, folklore, and supernatural romance.

Artifacts and Antiques in *DRACULA*

Recreating an eccentric Englishman's country home in 1897 can be quite a feat. A feat that properties manager Kris Haglund and the IRT properties shop have taken on with *DRACULA* which opened right on the heels of the Christmas and New Year's holidays. Artistic Director Tom Haas' adaptation of the Bram Stoker novel opened January 3 with a fantastically realistic set straight from 1897 and the IRT shop.

The challenges inherent in a script like *DRACULA* lie not only in the 1897 English locale but also in the preoccupations of Dr. Seward, whose country home is the play's single setting. "Finding 1897 English antiques in Indiana was a challenge," said set designer, Alison Ford. The properties department scowered antique stores and flea markets all over the state for furniture to fit the time period and locale. Some of these antiques are borrowed and others are rented from the dealers. Dr. Seward's preoccupations with botany and Egyptian archaeology lend a great deal to the mystique and mood of DRACULA -- as well as represent a great deal of work for the props shop: the set, Dr. Seward's living room, is filled with plants, scientific paraphernalia, and Egyptian artifacts. The plants are easily taken care of with silk and plastic imitations and a sprinkling of the real thing, but botany is more than plants. It's also scientific equipment --and 1897 vintage at that. Eli Lilly came to our aid on this score by providing beakers and the like to stock the Doctor's lab. However, the Egyptian artifacts were more difficult to obtain. The Children's Museum generously lent the theatre a few reproductions, but the remaining twenty- five odd pieces required by Ms. Ford's design were constructed by the IRT props shop. The "artifacts" were crafted with such materials as styrofoam, wood, plastics, and some metals from books on the treasures of King Tutankhamen's tomb as a guide.

DRACULA also demands an endless number of special effects that involve all areas of production costumes, scenery, lighting, and properties. Shattering mirrors, breaking vases, various types of fog, and of course, plenty of blood are just a few that involve the properties department. In order not to spoil the surprise and magic of each effect, only one will be explained: the breaking vase. This vase must break everynight at the same time in the same manner and make the same noise. This is ensured by using what is called "greenware" or unfired ceramic. Regular ceramic vases are fired at least two or three times for strength, but "greenware", because it is unfired, is very damp and brittle and easily broken. At least eight vases must be kept on hand each week -- one for every performance -- and each must be painted to resemble its Egyptian ancestors.

DRACULA *Synopsis*

by Janet Allen

The curtain opens on the main drawing room of Dr. Leonard Seward's country home in Bideford, Devon, England. It is an October evening in 1897. Dr. Seward, a country doctor with a particular inerest in unusual growth in plants and mental instability in humans, lives amid a curious collection of Egyptian artifacts collected by his globe-trotting father. Shortly we are introduced to Renfield, a mad youth under Dr. Seward's care. Renfield occupies Seward's time since the unusual death of Dr. Seward's niece three days earlier. We are also introduced to Jonathan Harker, a Lieutenant in the Bengal Lancers recently returned from Indian and engaged to Seward's daughter, Lucy.

As the evening progresses we learn that Seward is hosting a dinner party that night to which he has invited a new neighbor, a Count Dracula. Little is known of the Count, but he shares Seward's interest in botany, and Lucy's interest in opera. Another visitor arrives, Arthur Van Helsing, a professor from Rotterdam with whom Seward had been acquainted in student days. Seward had summoned Van Helsing, a eminent folklore scholar and medical researcher, when Seward's niece, Mina, lanquiched in an undiagnosed disease. Van Helsing has arrived too late to save Mina, but not too late to investigate her death, which he undertakes immediately.

Just as he gets underway in questioning the members of the household on their recollections of Mina's illness, Count Dracula appears. Although he refuses to dine, he does not refuse Lucy's invitation to retire to the library. With Seward and Harker, Van Helsing launches into an hypothesis by which Mina's death might be linked to a vampire attack. Evidence suggests that Lucy may know more than she is telling about Mina's condition so Van Helsing hypnotizes her while Harker entertains the Count in the library.

Under hypnosis, Lucy reveals that she too has the two marks on her neck like Mina's although she does not know how she got them. Just as their search into her mind becomes fascinating, Renfield bursts into the room. His strange behavior seems to have something to do with Lucy's hypnotic tale and Van Helsing is on the verge of linking Renfield to the vampire attack when he dissapears out into the moor. Seward, Harker and Van Helsing pursue him, leaving Count Dracula to keep Lucy company. The Count reads to Lucy inducing sleep, then revisits her as she dreams, causing her to cry out- in pain or pleasure?

At the beginning of Act Two, Renfield is watching the sunset the following night, now underguard by his attendant, Siimmons, who has just reveived a delivery of soil, sent to the house by Count Dracula, apparently for botany purposes. Renfield's agitation increases and Lucy seems more restless than ever. Count Dracula appears and woos Lucy: She is attracted but also concerned she has read a newspaper story which seems to link recent nocturnal attacks on children with her cousing Mina's night stalking. She asks Dracula about Mina but he disappears when he hears Van helsing returning.

Van Helsing notes Lucy's considerable agitation. He leaves her for a moment at which time Renfield who has stolen away from Simmons, sneaks into the room and attacks Lucy. Renfield claims to be Dracula's servant, and is angry that Lucy in interfering. Harker and Van Helsing rush in to rescue her, restraining Renfield and questioning him His cryptic answers both confuse and enlighten. As he is hauled away Seward returns and he, Van Helsing and Harker again try to piece together the incidents of the past few days, but this time they are able to conclude that the vampire is Dracula. Just as this startling conclusion reached, Lucy enters, determined to go to the cemetery to see if Mina has been buried alive. Her father and van Helsing, determined now that thhey must unearth Mina's body and drive a stake through her heart, promise Lucy that they will se to Mina's peaceful rest. Just as they are to leave, Dracula arrives, and Van Helsing confronts him. Far from denying his purpose, Dracula attempts to overpower Van Helsing, but Van Helsing resists Dracula's threats, and Dracula escapes. Harker, Seward and Van Helsing secure the house, putting garlic on each door and window. Believing that way will be safe, they leave for the cemetery and their fearful deed with Mina. But Lucy outwits them, removes the garlic, and invites Dracula in. Their passionate encounter seems to seal Lucy's doom.

Act Three begins as the 3 men keep vigil in the house late into the same night. Their cemetery deeds completed, and their visit to Dracula's house fruitless (they could not find his dormant body) they wait now for daylight and safety wondering where Dracula could be. Lucy finally confronts their vigilance and is told the story of Mina's final death. She refuses to believe it and the men are left to wonder where the last of Dracula's resting places may be. Just as their vigil is about to end Simmons brings Renfield, covered in blood into the room. Renfield's battered condition suggests Dracula's presence despite the garlic and crucifix precautions. Seeing Renfield's bloodied condition makes Lucy exhibit vampire qualities, and Van Helsing attempts to cleanse her by branding her with a consecrated wafer. They bring her around to the place where they believe she can act as lure to attract Dracula into the room and keep him there until daylight when he will wither and be destroyed. Lucy agrees to help.

As Dracula enters, it is minutes before daylight. Renfield lunges at him and is thrown to the ground. He captures Lucy as the 3 men leap from their hiding places with crucifixes. Dracula mocks them and just as daylight breaks, disappears into smoke. Renfield revives just long enough to tell them that Dracula lies dormant in an Egyptian sarcophagus in the room, Lucy having packed Transylvanian soil into it to prepare her way. The men reveal Dracula, and drive a stake through his heart, thus saving Lucy. But the question remains as the curtain falls- did Lucy want to be saved?

What Becomes A Legend Most?

Notes from the Playwright

by Tom Haas

Blackgama, of course. But it is hard to picture Count Dracula in the Rudolf Nureyev mink coat, as dashing as that vision may be. The central problem to a playwright who confronts a legend is how to make the story fresh once again. The novel, by Bram Stoker, sensationalized the Victorian world which came a decade before Freud's articulation of the subconscious. After Freud, there could be no innocent acts of the imagination. In 1985 therefore, it is impossible for us to imagine that Dracula and his victims do not carry with them some sense of the forbidden, of those dark passions not permitted to come into the Victorian soul. The ultimate conflict between a scientific, logical view of the world and one of passionate anarchy is embodied in the Dracula legend.

The novel was first dramatized by Balderston and Deane in the 1920's. At that time, the legend was still fresh, and clearly the text suggests that the audience was not overly familiar with the story. Who Dracula was remained a stage secret. Not so in 1985, when an audience comes to the theatre knowing the Count, whether it be from the movies, television, or breakfast cereal, and they ask instead, instead, "how will they get him this time?" The earlier manuscript moved about through three separate locations, and even in the recent Broadway revival with Frank Langella, the curtain beautifully dropped for three-quarters of a minute while an elaborate scene shift occurred in order to facilitate the last two minutes of the play. To an audience growing up on television and film, such a delay breaks our concentration in the harrowing climax.

Thoughts from the most speculative to the most concrete went through my mind as I started to write once again the story of the Transylvanian Count. I felt the legend belonged to its specific Victorian world and should not be wrenched from that world. Moreover, that Victorian world has come to have an echoing effect on our own disturbed century, for it is now seen as the last island of calm before the dreadful torment unleashed by the first World War. Most intriguing to me were the characters of Lucy and Renfield. I asked myself, could a young woman of sensibility be an innocent victim, or indeed, must the ground be fertile for the seed to grow? A second thought occurred: Did the over-disciplined and rarified youths of the last British aristocracy not tremble on the borderline of the forbidden? Other questions haunted me: could two men of science logically uncover Dracula's terrible secret, or was a leap of imagination necessary? Can a fiance possessing a rigid value system find any flexibility when confronted with the unknown? And, finally, can the play take place on one set?

While many of these questions had been contemplated in the past, when I originally prepared a Dracula adaptation to be produced at PlayMakers Repertory Theatre in North Carolina several years ago, I felt as if I was approaching the material from a fresh vantage point in reworking it for production here at IRT. As I rewrote, I found the storyline's rhythm beginning to breathe as the Count took center stage (which he doesn't do in the novel or in the original stage version, being, in fact, one of the tiniest title roles in history). As specific company actors came to mind, I found they reformed the characters of the story in much the same way that I believe most strong theatre pieces have been written, that is, in the rehearsal process, not closeted away with the typewriter. When Gavin Cameron-Webb, director of tonight's performance, came into the process, his observations and questions started my mind working again, and the script went into the 6th or 7th draft. Our Dramaturg, Janet Allen, who has a mind that sees the smallest detail or inconsistency and shakes it until it yields dramatic life, pushed me into the 9th, 10th, and 11th revisions. Finally, when Executive Secretary, Mary Dezelan, while putting the script into the computer, said innocently, "why does this happen?" I headed for the 12th.

Tonight's performance, then, will have been shifted still from the time this program has gone to press, as a script is hewn, polished, and brought into performance. What becomes a legend most? Perhaps it is that mink coat. Does anybody know Rudi's telephone number?

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