

A Labyrinth of Crime—A Play by ADA Dramatics

ADA Dramatics depicted their version of the famous story, *The Hound of The Baskervilles*, through a dramatic play. To promote their work, the team took a different turn, using mime and music to get the audience eager for the main production. The play saw a large group of theatre enthusiasts spending their evening enjoying ADA Dramatics' take on a popular fictional piece.

Promotional Mime

Parthiv Menon | **Staff Writer**

The troupe performed a short mime in front of Food Court 1 on 30th October 2019 which was a precursor to their play, *The Hound of The Baskervilles*, to be held on 2nd November 2019.

The cast of the mime, dressed in black with white paint on their faces, prepared themselves as the other members gathered people around in a circle. "*A mime is basically when the idea is conveyed only through expressions and music. There are no dialogues. This live mime will act as a trailer for our play*", remarked a member of the troupe.

The mime began with the murder of one of the characters. Sherlock Holmes, the popular fictional detective, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, is seen pondering over the circumstances before deducing his own theories through a series of meticulous observations. As the play proceeds, Holmes picks on various suspects while they deny the charges, before the mime ends, leaving the audience hanging.

The theatrical music used helped add depth to the spectacle. The performers did an excellent job portraying the plot while the cliff-hanger at the end left the audience anticipating the

main production. Overall, the mime was well received and set the stage for the play.

The Play

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On the evening of 2nd November 2019, theatre enthusiasts saw ADA Dramatics host one of their toughest productions *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Complete with street lamps and wooden walls, the Chaitya Hall at the Fortune Inn was perfectly suited to the tale set in the streets of Victorian England.

The play began with an introduction of the protagonists—Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson, at 221B, Baker Street. Holmes is seen as his usual self-erudite and pedantic self, with a hint of composed arrogance, as he makes impossible deductions from an object as ordinary as a walking stick.



A new client, Dr Mortimer, comes in with a strange case involving the late Sir Charles Baskerville, who is recently

found dead on his manor's grounds. He recounts a tale of the dastardly deeds of Sir Hugo Baskerville and introduces the audience to the legend of the Hound of the Baskervilles. The legend of a mysterious hound that had plagued the family since the death of Sir Hugo sets up the rest of the play. On the other side of the story, Sir Henry Baskerville—the only heir to the Baskerville fortune, finds his life under threat from forces unknown when he comes to England to claim his inheritance. As a result, he turns to Baker Street for help.

Sir Henry and Dr Watson are seen arriving at the seemingly quiet town of Grimpen, Dartmoor; but the lull of the moor masks many secrets, some scandalous. Holmes slowly unlocks these mysteries—the caretakers of Baskerville Hall seem to have their own agenda, and it is unclear if it is against the Baskervilles. The late Sir Charles seemed to be having an affair with a married woman when he died, and the seemingly innocent Stapleton brother-sister pair of naturalists are hatching a dark conspiracy. While Holmes discovers Mr Stapleton's involvement with the recent Hound sightings, Sir Henry is scared, running for his life. In a final standoff of the original script, Holmes kills both the man and his beast. However deviating from the original play, the producers added a surprise ending to this enthralling tale, showing Ms Stapleton, in league with husband, pulling a gun on Sir Henry.



Shantanu Sachdeva portrayed Holmes brilliantly, with a look of self-assurance that captured the character's spirit perfectly. Raghav Batra, though a good actor, was not the best physical fit for the role of Dr Watson, a tough ex-army doctor. Batra was overshadowed by Sachdeva's presence on the stage, though he had his moment in scenes without the titular character. Pratyush Prakash did well as the mild-mannered Dr Mortimer, though he too was overshadowed by the more theatrically strapping cast. Saksham Verma, who played Sir Henry, and first-year Shresth Singh, who portrayed Mr Stapleton, played their parts very well, radiating confidence and were both a good fit for their characters. *"I have prior experience in acting, and I was part of a theatre group in Delhi. This was a great experience and a tough role"*, stated Shresth Singh, when asked how it felt being given a major role in his first outing as an actor in college. Sanjana Nair had a pivotal role as Ms Stapleton, and her acting and expressions went well with her

character. Geetankar Karmakar brilliantly played the hunch-backed caretaker, Mr Barrymore, portraying the challenging character effortlessly.

Turning a story as puzzling and chilling as Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* into a play is no small feat. *"It is actually very hard. You have to think of a lot of things, from set design to casting. Management is key to everything"* remarked the director, Madhur Budhiraja, when asked about the process of directing the play. *"Since we have people from a lot of MAHE colleges, not just MIT, it becomes a lot harder to synchronise and time everything in such a way that it doesn't clash with study-related work"*, stated assistant director, Akshara Rohith. The team received a well-deserved round of applause from the appreciative audience. The play was well executed and ADA Dramatics was praised for the work they had put into the event.

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