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Dramatic Publishing



DRACULA!

The Radio Play
By
PHILIP GRECIAN

Based on his own stage play
and on the novel by Bram Stoker

Manuscript Version



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(DRACULA! - The Radio Play - manuscript)

ISBN: 1-58342-327-3

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Dracula! The Radio Play, written by Philip Grecian and based on his own stage play and the novel by Bram Stoker, was first produced and syndicated on tape to radio stations in 1973-1980. It was first adapted for the stage and produced at the Mill Creek Vintage Theatre in Paxico, Kansas, on October 29, 1999, under the direction of Karen Hastings with the following cast (in order of appearance):

DR. ABRAHAM VAN HELSING David Tangeman
 DR. JACK SEWARD Carl Peckham
 BIRDIE Dorianne Rees
 WILLIAMS Robb Baker
 JONATHAN HARKER Quinton Loder
 MINA HARKER Terry McDermott
 R.M. RENFIELD Philip Grecian
 LUCY WESTENRA Annie Wilcox
 COUNT DRACULA Robb Baker
 ANNOUNCER P. Huddleston

PRODUCTION STAFF AND CREW

HEAD FOLEY (SOUND) Ute Mueller
 FOLEY CREW Bob Lewis, P. Huddleston
 ORGANIST Melba Sutton
 STAGE MANAGER / LIGHTS Denise Butterfield
 LIGHT DESIGN Janet Glassman

NOTES FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

In the early 1970s I wrote a stage version of *Dracula!* that was produced by a local community theatre. The following year I adapted the script to radio-drama format and produced and directed it on tape for radio syndication. It aired around the country each Halloween, until I got busy with other projects and pulled it from the market in 1980.

Productions of the full-stage version were mounted by various theatres, including the Creede Repertory Theatre in Colorado, where the vampire count filled houses for a full summer season in 1983. The full-stage version still turns up here and there.

In 1999, Karen Hastings, who had played Mina for me in the radio program, started a theatre company and, since I had experience founding theatre companies, asked me to serve as mentor and offer a little guidance. As we were planning her first season, she asked if I still had the script for the *Dracula!* radio drama (of course I did!), and whether we could produce it for the stage (of course we could!). Since the syndicated version ran less than an hour, in order to fit a radio format and allow for commercials, I added a bit more from the full-stage version to lengthen it, and the Hastings company produced it each October for several years running. It was the first of many staged radio dramas the group did (and, at this writing, continues to do) for Halloween and Christmas. The group discovered that staged radio drama was economical, novel and pulled in audiences.

That first year of staged radio dramas, we discovered a few other things, too. Here are some of them:

1. Everything depends on sound. Never cast an actor because of his or her physical presence. Cast the actor because of what s/he can do vocally. Many of the actors from the golden age of radio looked not at all the way they sounded. If it helps, have auditions with the talent miked onstage behind the act curtain. Listen without looking.
2. Don't worry about costuming your actors to look like the characters they play. That's not the point. If you must have costuming, concentrate on the fashions of the 1940s, when radio was in its golden age.
3. Remind your actors that the voice must carry it all. A scowl or a posture is fine for the audience in attendance, and it may be necessary for your actors to establish character, but in the final evaluation, everything is in the voice.

4. Try to cast actors who can do multiple voices and accents. On-site audiences are fascinated to watch a single actor play multiple characters. Our Count Dracula that first year also played Williams, the attendant; our Lucy did a chilling baby cry in the Transylvanian scenes.
5. Music is terrifically important. It sets mood, moves your story from one location to another, one time to another, and it gives your audience clues regarding how they are supposed to relate to a scene. Do not try to produce radio drama without a piano or organ, and a musician who understands the radio art form.
6. The real visual drama for the on-site audience is in watching the sound effects crew. Make sure they, and their various apparatuses, are clearly seen.
7. Try never to use pre-recorded sound. It robs the audience of the experience of seeing how a sound is produced.
8. A pause that may be effective in a play with costumes, lights, sound and makeup will seem an eternity in a radio drama. Shorten pauses or eliminate them entirely. Always keep energy high. Always.
9. In the commercial breaks written into the script, consider actually selling commercial time to local merchants and dramatizing commercials written specifically for your production. It helps with the production budget, and audiences love it.

There is a phenomenon we noticed from that first staged radio adaptation of *Dracula!* that has carried through all the others: Many audience members will sit with their eyes closed, creating the radio experience for themselves. When we first noticed it, we thought they were falling asleep! Then we would see them suddenly look up toward the sound effects crew to see how a particular sound was created. Once they were satisfied, their heads would drop and their eyes would close again. They were experiencing theatre of the mind, literally.

If you have never staged radio drama before, you are about to make a startling and rewarding discovery, and so is your audience. The Golden Age of radio drama may have ended decades ago, but, with your participation, the Silver Age is just beginning.

— Philip Grecian

DRACULA!

A Radio Play in Two Acts
For 7 men and 3 women

CHARACTERS

DR. ABRAHAM VAN HELSING. . . . a Dutch specialist in obscure diseases,
mental illness and arcane ritual, and a vampire hunter

DR. JACK SEWARD a psychiatrist and surgeon who owns and operates
a sanitarium

BIRDIE Dr. Seward's head housekeeper and maid
Also plays: LAUGHING VAMPIRE in Harker's hypnosis scene

WILLIAMS head attendant at Dr. Seward's sanitarium

JONATHAN HARKER a solicitor with Peter Hawkins and Sons
and Mina's husband

MINA HARKER . Jonathan Harker's wife, formerly a nurse at the sanitarium
Also plays: LAUGHING VAMPIRE in Harker's hypnosis scene

R.M. RENFIELD. a resident at the sanitarium; a zoophagous maniac

LUCY WESTENRA Jack Seward's fiancée
Also plays: WOMAN'S VOICE
CHILD'S VOICE
LAUGHING VAMPIRE in Harker's hypnosis scene

COUNT DRACULA a boyar, a count, a vampire

ANNOUNCER 1940s-style radio announcer

PLACE: Transylvania, in the Carpathian Mountains,
and Whitby, England.

TIME: 1888.

ACT ONE

SETTING: A radio studio. Doors R and L. A control booth window at an angle from UC to ULC, with an "On Air" light above. A platform DL where the keyboard player sits. DR is an array of sound effects machines and tables with sound equipment. There is a couch and a coffee table UC, a counter area UR with water pitchers and cups. Chairs and incidental tables scattered. Downstage are three microphones evenly spaced. The light plot is simple: A general wash for the beginning and end of Act One and the beginning of Act Two, the ability to independently dim the lights upstage and downstage, and the ability to spot each of the microphones.

AT RISE: Sound effects crew enters and crosses to equipment. Keyboard player enters. Actors enter one at a time and in groups. Some carry scripts.

P.A. VOICE. Thirty seconds to air!

ALL (ad-lib). Thank you! (The ACTORS, ad-libbing, prepare. Some leaf through their scripts. Some pick up scripts from chairs and tables. Others sit or move to microphones.)

P.A. VOICE. In ten...

(The pace quickens as those ACTORS on microphones find places in their scripts and listen for the P.A. or watch the "On Air" light on the set.)

P.A. VOICE. 5...4...3...2...1...

(“On Air” light comes on.)

SINGERS *(sing call letters in four-part harmony)*. “W- - - !”

MUSIC UNDER.

ANNOUNCER. Broadcasting from the *(call letters based on name of producing group)* Studios, and through the sponsorship of *(names of sponsors)*, *(name of producing group)* presents *Dracula!* a radio play written by Philip Grecian, based on his own stage play and on the novel by Bram Stoker. Our story in a moment, but first, a word from our sponsor.

MUSIC CHANGE.

(Plug in commercial here.)

MUSIC. Dracula Theme.

ANNOUNCER. And now...turn out your lights and move in close to the glow of your radio dial as *(call letters)* presents...*Dracula!*

MUSIC. Organ sting.

SFX: Wind, violent thunderstorm. Establish with a thunderclap and under.

(All of VAN HELSING’s narrative pieces are slightly echoed.)

VAN HELSING *(Dutch accent, narrative echo)*. Frightening, is it not? The raw power of the thunderstorm. Primitive man feared it...but you and I...we have explained it with our modern science. Still...there are many things we cannot explain, and these are always with us. They are with you now. Even now you feel them stealing up behind you. You feel them as they stroke the back of your neck...never quite touching. There. You feel it? You dare not look, for if you do...they will know. *(An intense whisper.)* But you *feel* them! You feel their fingers of smoke as they brush...so close. They taunt you...dare you to turn and look into their hellish eyes, only inches from your own. The hair rises on the back

of your neck. A chill passes through your body. You *feel* them. But you do not see, for the beacon of science creates deep shadows, and they hide in these shadows...and they laugh that you do not believe...and they wait. Always they wait...until you are alone. All alone. In the dark. There! Listen! (*A silence. Whisper:*) They whisper your name. Did you hear? They...know...your...name. (*A pause, then:*) But, of course, I forget. You do not believe. It is only imagination, eh? Perhaps. Or perhaps it is...the vampire!

MUSIC. Sting.

VAN HELSING. I am Dr. Abraham Van Helsing, and I have long followed the trail of the vampire. It lives on...for centuries...draining the blood...the life...from its victims, causing them also to become vampires. And this is our story. The story of a small band of mortals who faced the most powerful vampire of them all. He has been known by many names...strigoi, wutrich, ordog, pokol, vrolok, nosferatu, wampyr*...and...Dracula!

[*struh-GOY, VOO-trick, OR-dog, PAW-kole, VRO-lock, nos-fer-AW-too, (v)wahm-PEER]

SFX: Thunderclap, followed by ominous low rumble of thunder.

MUSIC. Sudden minor chord. Sustain. Fade under.

VAN HELSING. It began in the year 1888, in Whitby, England, where Dr. Jack Seward had established a small sanitarium. (*Cut narrative echo.*)

SFX: Knocking at door.

SEWARD. Come in.

SFX: Door opens. Closes.

BIRDIE. Excuse me, Dr. Seward, sir...I was wonderin' if you was done with your dinner tray?

SEWARD. Yes, of course, Birdie. Over there on the desk.

BIRDIE. Yes, sir.

SFX: BIRDIE's footsteps.

BIRDIE (*as she walks*). You're 'most out of wine, sir. I'll bring another bottle.

SEWARD. Thank you.

BIRDIE. Why, you ain't touched a thing!

SEWARD. I'm not very hungry this evening.

BIRDIE. Ain't Miss Lucy any better, sir?

SEWARD. No. No, I'm afraid not.

SFX: Thunder in background. Storm coming in.

BIRDIE. If there's anything...

SEWARD. Thank you, Birdie.

BIRDIE. I'll take your dinner tray, then.

SEWARD. Thank you.

SFX: Glassware and flatware clinking. BIRDIE's footsteps to door.

BIRDIE. Good night, then, sir.

SEWARD. Good night.

SFX: Door opens, closes. Clinking and footsteps continue.

(We are now with BIRDIE, in the hall.)

BIRDIE (*mumbling*). Tch, tch. Just awful. Poor Dr. Seward, he just...

WILLIAMS. Boo! (*Or a suitable shout.*)

BIRDIE (*screams*)

SFX: Crockery and cutlery hit the floor, breaking and scattering.

BIRDIE. Williams! Now look what you've done! You're payin' for these dishes!

WILLIAMS. Was you dropped 'em, luv.

BIRDIE. Was *you* made me! Now help me clean up here.

WILLIAMS. All right, all right.

SFX: Under dialogue, cleaning up broken crockery, gathering cutlery.

BIRDIE. I'm surprised the doctor ain't out here. Made enough noise t'wake the dead.

WILLIAMS. Take a lot more'n a few broken dishes t'bring him to. 'E's been sittin' in there all day, not movin', just starin' off into space...thinkin'. There, that's got it all up.

BIRDIE (*unhappily*). I'll have t'sweep for wee bits.

WILLIAMS. Y'seen anything of Renfield?

BIRDIE. The one what eats spiders?

WILLIAMS. Most like a spider 'imself...skinny, scurryin', little beggar. Gotta find 'im, 'fore somebody misses 'im.

SFX: WILLIAMS' footsteps fade.

WILLIAMS (*off mike*). Keep yer eyes open!

BIRDIE (*calling after him*). It's your job to watch, not mine!

SFX: BIRDIE's footsteps down stairs. Clinking crockery. Knocking on door faintly, off mike.

BIRDIE (*under her breath*). ...but I'll keep me eyes open, all the same. Now who could that be at this hour?

SFX: BIRDIE's footsteps and clinking crockery continue under. Knocking comes on mike as BIRDIE approaches.

BIRDIE. Comin'! I said I'm comin'!

SFX: She puts down tray, opens door. Sound of wind. Thunderclap.

BIRDIE. Yes?

HARKER. Is this the sanitarium...Dr. Seward's sanitarium?

BIRDIE. It is.

MINA. Is Dr. Seward in?

BIRDIE. Well, of course 'e's in on a night like this. Where else would 'e be? Come back tomorrow at a decent hour.

MINA (*quickly*). He's expecting us.

SFX: Thunder.

BIRDIE. Hm. Storm comin' up. (*Sigh.*) Better come in, then.

HARKER. Thank you.

SFX: Shuffling. Door closes. Cut wind.

HARKER. We're the Harkers...Jon and Mina.

BIRDIE. Ooooooh, Miss Lucy talks about you lot.

MINA. How *is* Lucy?

BIRDIE. Not so good, mum. Wastin' away.

HARKER. Where's Jack?

BIRDIE. Upstairs in 'is office.

MINA. May we see him?

BIRDIE. Yes, mum. This way.

MUSIC. Bridge.

SFX: Knocking at door.

SEWARD. Come in.

SFX: Door opens.

BIRDIE. Dr. Seward, sir, there's some people here to...

SEWARD. Jonathan! Mina! Come in!

MINA. We came the moment we received your wire.

SFX: Door closes.

SEWARD. Mina, you never looked lovelier! Jon, there's wine over there, would you care for some?

HARKER. Of course! Mina?

MINA. Please.

SFX: Clinking of glasses. Pouring wine.

HARKER. I see you've done some work on the old place.

SEWARD. I have.

HARKER How long since you moved in here? Two years?

SEWARD. Two years this month.

HARKER. You're a bit low on wine.

SEWARD. There's more coming.

HARKER. Good.

MINA. It's perfect, isn't it?

SEWARD. The wine?

HARKER *(makes a sound to indicate he has just finished a sip)*. Um...
hardly.

MINA. You know what I mean! This building!

SEWARD. I owe that to Jon. His law firm found it and saw to the purchase.

MINA. It's ever so much better than the old building.

SEWARD. Come back to work for me, Mina! You were the best nurse I ever had!

HARKER. She's retired.

MINA. No, darling. I married and went into private practice, looking after you.

(They laugh.)

SEWARD. Lucy once told me that when you were little girls, you were always nursing injured birds back to health.

HARKER. She still does.

MINA. Jack, is Lucy any better?

SEWARD (*a pause. Sigh*). Worse each day. That's why I've brought her to the sanitarium. Here I have the staff and equipment to monitor her health.

HARKER. The wedding...?

SEWARD. Postponed.

MINA. Her illness...have you diagnosed it?

SEWARD. No. I have no idea what it is. She gets weaker every day... periodically slips into some sort of...trance-like state. She's taken to sleepwalking, and...

sHARKER. That can be dangerous, with the...

SEWARD. Yes, the cliffs, the harbor...

MINA. Isn't there anything...

SEWARD. There's got to be. I've cabled Van Helsing...

HARKER. Abraham Van Helsing? From Amsterdam? In medical school, you...

SEWARD. ...studied under him. Yes.

HARKER. The London papers have been quoting from his books on ritual murder.

SEWARD. Oh?

HARKER. Yes. What with the Ripper murders in Whitechapel...

SEWARD. Oh. Of course. (*Pause.*)

HARKER. Van Helsing's coming here, then?

SEWARD. Mm. Yes. I expect him at any time. He sent this ahead.

SFX: *Beads rattle.*

HARKER. A necklace?

SEWARD. A crucifix.

MINA. It's exquisite! Slavic?

SEWARD. Transylvanian, I think.

HARKER. Let me see.

SFX: Beads rattle. Door opens.

BIRDIE. More wine, sir.

SEWARD. Thank you, Birdie. Put it over there.

BIRDIE. Yes, sir.

HARKER. Hm. Yes, this is probably Transylvanian, Jack. I saw some like it when I was there.

MINA. He wanted Lucy to wear this?

SEWARD. At all times, according to his note. Said she shouldn't be without it.

HARKER. Why?

SEWARD. Can't imagine.

HARKER. She's not wearing it now.

SEWARD. She won't touch it.

MINA. May I see her?

SEWARD. Birdie, is Miss Lucy awake?