



## The Mystery of Irma Vep

**By Charles Ludlam • Directed by Patrick Spike**

**Location:** Venetian Theatre, 253 E. Main St., Hillsboro, OR 97123

**Opening Night:** Fri May 13, 2011 • 7:30pm

**Runs:** May 13-29, 2011

**Previews:** Wed May 11 & Thurs May 12 • 7:30pm

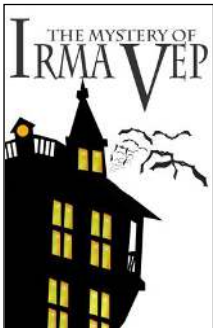
**Tickets:** \$18–23; all preview tickets \$12

**Show Times:** Thurs, Fri, Sat, 7:30pm; Sun, 2:00pm

**Buy tickets:** Online at [www.bagnbaggage.org](http://www.bagnbaggage.org)  
or call the box office: **503-345-9590**

## Bag&Baggage Presents *The Mystery of Irma Vep*

*Irma Vep satirizes all that is ridiculous in Gothic horror, Victorian melodrama, classic film, and conventional theater—it's also a contender for the funniest American play of the last quarter-century.*



Hillsboro, OR—April 20, 2011—All is not well at Mandacrest Manor. Ever since the sudden death of Lady Irma Vep (the former mistress of the estate, known for her eerie penchant for the occult), a certain uneasiness has permeated the Victorian mansion. Not only does a mysterious wolf haunt the heath outside, but Lady Irma's spirit seems to be watching over Mandacrest, much to the chagrin of its new mistress, the former actress Lady Enid. Even the servants are discomfited, including Nicodemus Underwood (a stable hand with a secret identity), and Jane Twisden (the disgruntled housekeeper, with a few secrets of her own).

*The Mystery of Irma Vep*, by Charles Ludlam (founder of Ridiculous Theatre), is a wildly charming patchwork parody of literary and cinematic icons including Alfred Hitchcock, *Wuthering Heights*, Edgar Allen Poe, and Shakespeare. It's a highly-charged comedic showcase for actors; two shape-shifting Thespians play eight different characters, changing identities with lightning-flash dexterity, all but bumping into themselves onstage. The sight gags and campy complications pile up as fast as their incredibly speedy character switches.

"Far and away the two funniest hours anywhere."

—*The New York Times*

Says director Patrick Spike, "Author Charles Ludlam loved classic literature and enjoyed honoring it through hilarious spoofS intended as homage. Imagine *Wuthering Heights*, Hitchcock's *Rebecca*, *The Mummy's Curse*, *Macbeth*...all thrown in a blender on frappé funny. It's melodrama, drag, mystery and a bit of magical mayhem, all from merely two actors changing costumes like lightning."

Adds artistic director Scott Palmer, "Irma Vep is a satire with deep and loving affection for literature, so it fits nicely in Bag&Baggage's canon of text-based plays."

*Irma Vep* has won awards including a Drama Desk, an Obie, a Lucille Lortel, and multiple nominations from the Outer Critics Circle. In 1991, it was the most produced play in the United States, and it's been popular internationally; in 2003, it became the longest-running play ever produced in Brazil. It was named one of 1984's best plays by *Time Magazine* and *The New York Times*.

Scot Carson (recently seen in Bag&Baggage's *Macbeth* as the title character) and Jason Glick (recently seen as Jamie in *Dirty Bomb* at the Fertile Ground Festival) star; Patrick Spike directs. Recommended for age 13 and over.

- Buy tickets online: [www.bagnbaggage.org](http://www.bagnbaggage.org) or call our box office **503-345-9590**
- Box Office hours Mon–Fri, 2:30–4:30pm, and 90 minutes prior to performances. Voicemails will be returned during office hours

## About the Playwright

Charles Ludlam (April 12, 1943 – May 28, 1987)

Ludlam founded the Ridiculous Theatrical Company in New York City in 1967. His first plays were considered by some to be undeveloped exercises: however, starting with *Bluebeard* he began to write more structured works, which, though they were pastiches of gothic novels, Shakespeare, Wagner, popular culture, old movies, and anything else that might get a laugh, had

...“a highly praised and deeply cherished Renaissance man of the theater.”

—The New York Times

more serious import. Theater critic Brendan Gill after seeing one of Ludlam's plays famously remarked, "This isn't farce. This isn't absurd. This is absolutely

ridiculous!". Ludlam usually appeared in his plays, and was particularly noted for his female roles. He wrote one of the first plays to deal (though tangentially) with HIV infection; he was diagnosed with AIDS in March 1987. He died of PCP pneumonia in St. Vincent's Hospital, New York. The street in front of his theatre in Sheridan Square was renamed "Charles Ludlam Lane" in his honor.

Ludlam had taught or staged productions at New York University, Connecticut College for Women, Yale University, and Carnegie Mellon University. He won fellowships from the Guggenheim, Rockefeller and Ford Foundations and grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts. He won four Obie Awards, the last one two weeks before his death, and won the Rosamund Gilder Award for distinguished achievement in the theater in 1986.

His most popular play, and the only one to enter the standard repertory, is *The Mystery of Irma Vep*, in which two actors manage, through a variety of quick-change techniques, to play all the roles in a send-up of gothic horror novels. The original production featuring Ludlam and his lover Everett Quinton was a tour de force. In order to ensure cross-dressing, rights to perform the play include a stipulation that the actors must be of the same sex.



## Production history of *The Mystery of Irma Vep*

*The Mystery of Irma Vep* was first produced by Charles Ludlam's Ridiculous Theatrical Company, opening off-off-Broadway in New York City's Greenwich Village in September 1984 and closing in April 1986. It starred Ludlam as Lady Enid, the new mistress of the manor and Nicodemus, and Everett Quinton (Ludlam's partner) as Lord Edgar Hillcrest, the master of the manor and the housekeeper (among other characters). The "Cast and Crew" won a Special Drama Desk Award. Ludlam and Quinton won the 1985 Obie Award for Ensemble Performance.

The show was later produced off-Broadway at the Westside Theatre from September 1998 through July 1999. The production won the 1999 Lucille Lortel Award for Outstanding Revival, and Outer Critics Circle Award nominations for Outstanding Revival of a Play, Outstanding Lighting Design (John Lee Beatty), and Outstanding Costume Design (William Ivey Long).

In 1991, *Irma Vep* was the most-produced play in the United States, and in 2003, it became the longest-running play ever produced in Brazil.

## Director's Notes by Patrick Spike

"camp"—noun—Deliberately exaggerated and theatrical behavior or style

Charles Ludlam's ridiculous theatre movement came about out of an effort to bend theatre and entertainment status quo on its ear. It poked fun at things being taken for granted, or being readily accepted; things in need of reevaluating. What started out being seen as fun, frivolous and even foolish, soon was recognized as something more. It was political and provocative and pushed people's buttons. Along the way, Ludlam created a piece that is one of the most challenging things I've ever worked on, in its acting, directing and production elements.



*Scot Carson and Jason Glick. Photo by Patrick Spike*

The Ridiculous Theater Company and others like it helped to shape the cultural landscape of the 1970s. It was one of the birthplaces of "camp" performance and art. At the same time Glam Rock and Disco was raging. Warhol was changing how we saw art and the artist. Quentin Crisp was bending gender norms in person and with the bio film "The Naked Civil Servant," talking about personal style, and "Rocky Horror" was unleashed on the world. Fashion and art and love were all exploding in new, exploratory and provocative ways. We have Charles Ludlam and his colleagues to thank for blowing apart some long-held theatrical and storytelling conventions, paving the way for new forms that delight us in all sorts of mediums today. Some say had Ludlam survived longer, that he was on his way to becoming the Moliere of our time.

# Ridiculous Theatre Manifesto

Ridiculous Theater, Scourge of Human Folly - by Charles Ludlam

Aim: To get beyond nihilism by revaluing combat.

Axioms to a theater for ridicule:

1. You are a living mockery of your own ideals. If not, you have set your ideals too low.
2. The things one takes seriously are one's weaknesses.
3. Just as many people who claim belief in God disprove it with their every act, so too there are those whose every deed, though they say there is no God, is an act of faith.
4. Evolution is a conscious process.
5. Bathos is that which is intended to be sorrowful but because of the extremity of its expression becomes comic. Pathos is that which is meant to be comic but because of the extremity of its expression becomes sorrowful. Some things which seem to be opposites are actually different degrees of the same thing.
6. The comic hero thrives on his vices. The tragic hero is destroyed by his virtue. Moral paradox is the crux of drama.
7. The theater is a humble materialist enterprise which seeks to produce riches of the imagination, not the other way around. The theater is an event not an object. Theater workers need not blush and conceal their desperate struggle to pay the landlords their rents. Theater without the stink of art.

Instructions for use:

This is farce, not Sunday school. Illustrate hedonistic calculus. Test out a dangerous idea, a theme that threatens to destroy one's whole value system. Treat the material in a madly farcical manner without losing the seriousness of the theme. Show how paradoxes arrest the mind. Scare yourself a bit along the way.

## About the Director—Patrick Spike

Patrick Spike, known as "Spike" to those close to him, has been directing since 1986 up and down the west coast. Somewhat of a veteran to the camp style, past campy projects have included *Greater Tuna*, *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, *Angry Housewives* and *Vampire Lesbians of Sodom*. Other past favorites include *The House of Blue Leaves*, *Romance/Romance*, *Social Security*, and of course *Educating Rita* here at Bag&Baggage. Spike will also be directing next season's spring production on the Venetian stage. He also had the distinct pleasure of being one of four professional directors invited to participate in Portland Center Stage's first Commission/Commission event, working with world class authors. Spike is also a performer, most recently seen as Lady Bracknell in B&B's production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He is a performing arts administrator, fundraiser, marketer, consultant and more. He is current a member of B&B's board of directors as Audience Development Director.



*Patrick Spike*  
*Photo by Casey Campbell*



Spike is Director of Client Services for Ticket Turtle, which provides patron management systems to performing arts organizations all over the US and Canada.

He's been involved with theatre for over 20 years as a director, performer and stage manager, and has taught at the university level. He holds a BA in Theatre Directing from Western Washington University, and an MFA in Theatre Directing from Humboldt State University.

## Cast

### Scot Carson

Lord Edgar Hillcrest, Jane Twisden, an Intruder, others

Scot made his Bag&Baggage debut as the title character in B&B's 2011 Macbeth, and will be in the upcoming summer outdoor Shakespeare show, *The Tempest*. Other recent work includes two seasons on tour and in residency with the American Shakespeare Center in Staunton, Virginia, where his roles included Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*, Exeter in *Henry V*, Gremio/Sly in *Taming of the Shrew*, Ghost/Player King in *Hamlet*, Solinus in *The Comedy of Errors*, and Fezziwig/Topper in *A Christmas Carol*. He has worked locally with Northwest Classical Theatre Company, Classic Greek Theatre, Northwest Children's Theatre, Tygres Heart Shakespeare Company, Portland Actors Conservatory (as a guest artist) Portland Actors Ensemble, Hillsboro Artists Repertory Theatre, and the American Heritage Theatre Project, in roles including The Duke in *Big River*, The Mad Hatter in *Alice in Wonderland*, Talbot in *Henry VI Part 1*, Berowne in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, and Apemantus in *Timon of Athens*. Scot received his BA in Theatre Arts/Speech Communications from OSU.



Scot Carson  
Photo by Patrick Spike

### Jason Glick

Nicodemus Underwood, Lady Enid Hillcrest, Alcazar, others

Jason has been a professional actor, director and teacher for over 20 years. Born and raised in Chicago, he earned a BFA in theatre arts from Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. His exposure to the vibrant professional theatre in Chicago sparked his interest in the profession at an early age. He founded a theatre company in Nashville Tennessee, and worked extensively with the other companies in Nashville, as well as various companies throughout Chicago and the Midwest. Jason moved to Portland in October of 2009. Since then, he has been seen in shows with the Fertile Ground Festival, Fuse Theatre Company, and Clackamas Repertory Theatre. He is currently touring with the Jewish Theatre Collaborative. Favorite past roles include Charles in *An Infinite Ache*, Baker in *Into the Woods*, and Biff in *Death of a Salesman*.



Jason Glick

## Media

- 31-second video of Scot Carson's transformation from Macbeth to Jane Twisden  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mepTFRmWFwo>
- 13-minute Director's intro and first rehearsal  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TFS7Tlun48&feature=youtu.be>