



Tales of the Mad, the Mysterious, and the Macabre

Performed by Joshua Kane

Welcome to *Keynotes*, a performance guide created by the Education Department of the State Theatre in New Brunswick, NJ. These *Keynotes* are designed to be used before and after attending *Gothic at Midnight*.

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WHAT IS Gothic At Midnight?

In *Gothic at Midnight*, actor/storyteller Joshua Kane takes the audience into a world of the strange, the whimsical, and the terrifying. Using a minimum of props and furniture, he weaves his magic with two of the most powerful tools in live theater: his expressive voice and the audience's imagination. Kane's one-man performance draws on classic stories and traditional folktales from many cultures. (You'll find background on three of the stories inside these *Keynotes*.) Despite differences in characters, situations, and style, the stories show us that people all over the world have always loved a good scare!



"I believe that one of the reasons that we read and watch horror is to test ourselves, for when we survive the journey with the character we ourselves become stronger."
—Joshua Kane



GOTHIC (goth'-ick) - in literature, a style of fiction that emphasizes the grotesque, mysterious, and gloomy.

MIDNIGHT - the "witching hour," a time when spirits, ghosts, demons, and devils are believed to be most powerful.

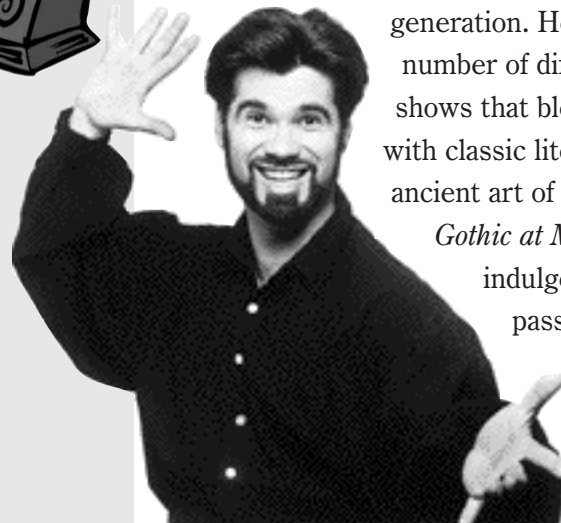
BIOGRAPHY

Joshua Kane

A classically-trained actor, Joshua Kane has played a wide range of roles. His distinctive voice can be heard on television, recordings, and narrating live concerts. The first volume of his audio adaptation of *Gothic at Midnight* was nominated for a 1999 Bram Stoker Award.

Joshua has always been fascinated by the old-time radio dramas of performers such as Orson Welles and Vincent Price. In this style of drama, called "Theater of the Mind," listeners used their imaginations to create their own visual images for the stories they listened to on the radio. Joshua has been inspired to

reinvent this tradition for a new generation. He has created a number of different one-man shows that blend solo theater with classic literature and the ancient art of storytelling. In *Gothic at Midnight*, he indulges two of his passions: blowing the dust off the classics and giving people nightmares.



RADIO DAYS

Check out some of the original radio broadcasts that inspired Joshua Kane to create *Gothic at Midnight*:

The Orson Welles Collection: *Dracula* and *War of the Worlds*. Storyville Records, 2000. Orson Welles' *War of the Worlds* is the most famous "theater of the mind" broadcast of all time!

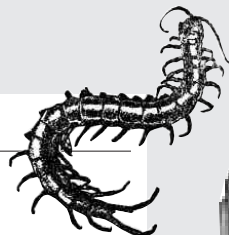
www.botar.us/archives.html - At Botar's Old Time Radio website, you can listen to dozens of classic radio broadcasts, including dramas, mysteries, westerns, thrillers, comedies, and even Superman.

www.otr.com - Radio Days offers an online history of broadcast radio history in sound. It includes a timeline of broadcast history plus news and drama history with soundbites.

"Fear makes the wolf bigger than he is."
—German Proverb

BACKGROUND

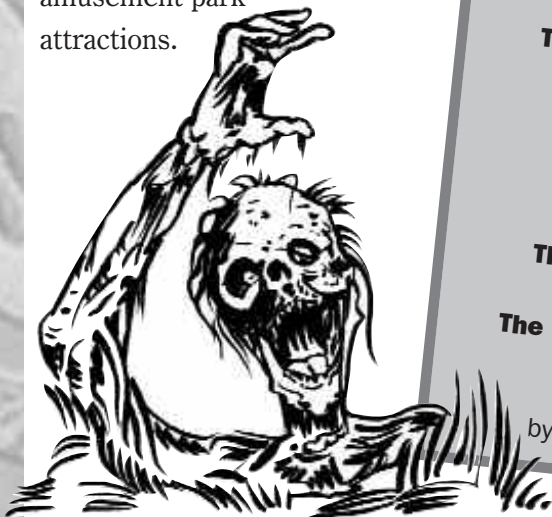
Horror Fiction



Horror fiction has been with us for as long as people have been telling stories. Murderers, monsters, and the supernatural can be found in the earliest recorded folktales and myths. Scary stories weren't just for adults, either. Children's stories, such as the ones collected by the Grimm Brothers, often included elements of violence, horror, and suspense.

In Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a style of fiction known as the **gothic novel** became extremely popular. These books established many of the conventions that are still common in the horror genre today, including mystery, suspense, terror (both psychological and physical), the supernatural, haunted castles, darkness, madness, and helpless young women. You'll find many of these elements in the writings of contemporary authors such as Stephen King, Dean Koontz, R.L. Stine, and Anne Rice.

Modern horror stories aren't confined to books. We love to terrify ourselves with movies, graphic novels, plays, television shows, video games, and even amusement park attractions.



"We're all afraid of the same things. That's why horror is such a powerful genre. All you have to do is ask yourself what frightens you and you'll know what frightens me."
—John Carpenter



FEAR FACTOR

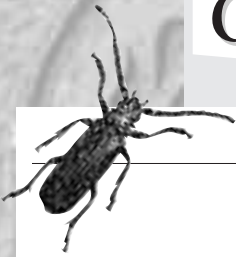
- What is fear? What is horror? What is terror? Do they mean the same thing?
- Why does horror sometimes make us laugh? How is it possible for us to find something both frightening and funny at the same time?
- Some horror stories terrify us with vividly detailed descriptions of gruesome murders, hideous monsters, painful torture, etc. Other stories merely *suggest* what might be happening and leave it to our imagination to fill in the details. What are some examples of books, movies, tv shows, etc. that illustrate these two types of horror storytelling? Which style do you find most frightening? Which do you prefer? Why?
- What scares you the most? Write a short piece of horror fiction—a poem, short story, or short drama—based on your own personal "hobgoblin."



GOTHIC READING CLUB

- The Castle of Otranto**
by Horace Walpole
- The Mysteries of Udolpho**
by Ann Radcliffe
- The Monk**
by Matthew Lewis
- Christabel** (poem)
by Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- Frankenstein**
by Mary Shelley
- The Cask of Amontillado**
by Edgar Allan Poe
- Wuthering Heights**
by Emily Brontë
- Dracula**
by Bram Stoker
- The Turn of the Screw**
by Henry James
- The Phantom of the Opera**
by Gaston Leroux
- Rebecca**
by Daphne du Maurier

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."
—H.P. Lovecraft



EDGAR ALLAN POE

The Tell-Tale Heart

TRUE! nervous, very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses, not destroyed, not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How then am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily, how calmly, I can tell you the whole story.

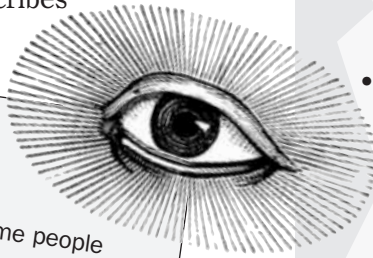


GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE STORY

With these words, the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" begins his story. He tells us that he was deeply frightened by the deformed eye of an old man who lived in the same house: "...it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye." He describes in great detail how he finally rid himself of the disturbing eye and disposed of the evidence of his crime. Once the deed was done, however, he was seized with a new torment: a dull, throbbing sound. Later, the police showed up to investigate the report of a scream; but they did not seem to hear the throbbing sound, which the narrator says kept getting louder and louder. Unable to bear the noise any longer, the narrator confessed his guilty secret to the police.

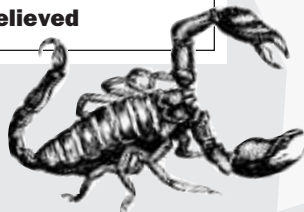
Published in 1843, "The Tell-Tale Heart" is probably the best-known work by American author Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849). In his short life, Poe contributed to the development of the American short story and pioneered such literary genres as detective fiction, crime fiction, gothic/horror fiction, and even science fiction. "The Tell-Tale Heart," though brief, features themes (madness, guilt) and devices (such as the **unreliable narrator**) that continue to shape and define horror fiction.

EVIL EYE -
a belief, shared by many folk cultures, that some people have the power to inflict harm just by looking at someone.



UNRELIABLE NARRATOR - in fiction, a first-person narrator whose story cannot necessarily be believed

- Imagine that you are an actor preparing to perform this story in front of an audience. Pick out words and phrases from the opening paragraph that give you some clues about how to play this character.
- With several of your classmates, improvise the questioning of the narrator by the policemen. Try showing the scene from different points of view—as the policemen see it, and then the narrator. How does the story change when you shift the perspective?
- Working in a group of at least five people, try presenting this story to the rest of your class as a radio play. Will you have one person read the entire story, or assign sections to different people? What kinds of music and sound effects can you use to help create the world of the story for your listeners?
- There's nothing in "The Tell-Tale Heart" to indicate the gender of the narrator, although it's usually assumed to be a man. Would your ideas about the story be any different if the narrator were a woman?



Read "The Tell-Tale Heart" at http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/p/poe/edgar_allan/p74c/cons4.html

IÑUPIAQ LEGEND

Totangunak

Bedtime has always been the best time for scary stories. As we lie there in that magical twilight, half awake and half asleep, ghosts and goblins and monsters seem a lot more real than they do during the daytime. In *Gothic at Midnight*, you'll hear an **Iñupiaq** folktale about a little boy who discovers what lurks on the other side of that sleepy dreamworld. Challenged by a mysterious visitor named Totangunak to a game of "string stories," the child learns a lesson he is not likely to forget!

IÑUPIAQ - also called IÑUPIAT, the Inuit people of Northwestern Alaska



"From ghoulies and ghosties
And long-leggeddy beasties
And things that go bump in the night,
Good Lord, deliver us!"
—Scottish prayer

WHERE DO STORIES COME FROM?

Joshua Kane first heard this "bedtime story" at summer camp when he was around ten years old. He can't remember exactly how the camp counselors told it, but he's pretty sure they used string figures. Over the years, he has told the story hundreds of times and made it his own. It has become one of his most popular tales, especially among other storytellers.

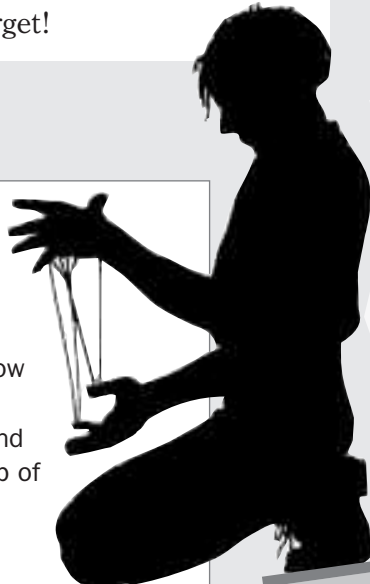
- Ask your older relatives to share any stories that have been passed down in your family. Do they all remember the same stories in exactly the same way? Are their stories based on actual events? Traditional folktales? Have each person in your class write down his or her favorite family story and assemble them all together into a book. Even better, share your stories aloud!
- Pay attention to the different theater techniques Joshua Kane uses to tell this tale. How does he draw the audience into the story?
- After you've heard this "string story," try turning it into a graphic novel. What do you think Totangunak should look like?



Telling Stories with String

If you've ever played "cat's cradle" with a friend, then you know something about string games. Making string figures—patterns and pictures created by weaving a loop of string around the fingers of both hands—is an old and popular pastime found in cultures all over the world, including North and South America, Africa, East Asia, Australia, the Pacific Islands, and the Arctic.

Some of the most difficult and intricate string figures come from Alaska's Iñupiaq. Iñupiaq values are reflected in their ancient art of *Airraq*, or "string storytelling," which combines storytelling with string figures. Passed down from generation to generation, the stories are not just entertainment—they are used to teach lessons, morals, history, and practical knowledge. The string figures help illustrate the story, forming visual images of humans and animals to reinforce key themes and characters.



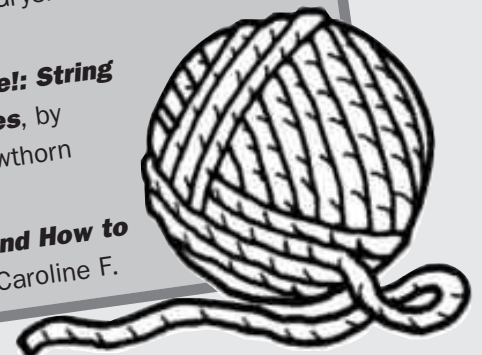
STRING THINGS

Arctic String Figure Project -
www.isfa.org/arctic/jenness.htm

Cat's Cradle, Owl's Eyes: A Book of String Games, by Camilla Gryski. HarperTrophy, 1984.

Pull the Other One!: String Games and Stories, by Michael Taylor. Hawthorn Press, 2001.

String Figures and How to Make Them, by Caroline F.



SCARING

THE

DICKENS

OUT

OF

US

CHARLES DICKENS

The Uncommercial Traveler Chapter XV — Nurse's Stories

Captain Murderer's mission was matrimony, and the gratification of a cannibal appetite with tender brides.

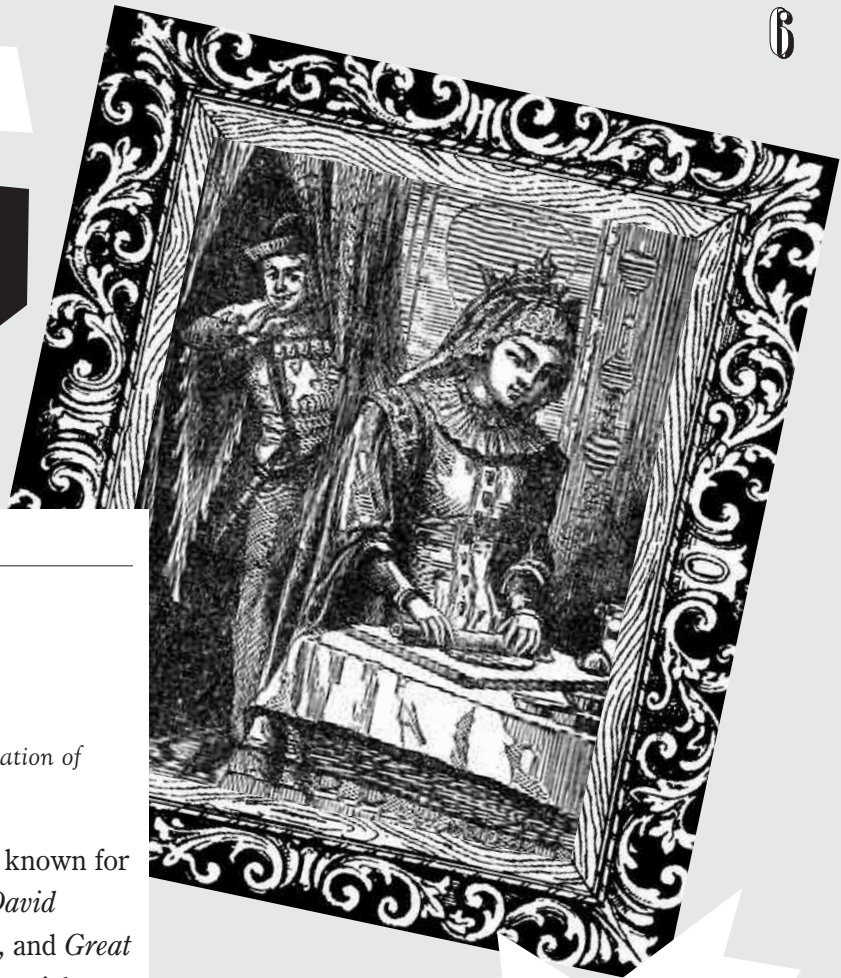
English writer Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is best known for his novels, including *Oliver Twist*, *A Christmas Carol*, *David Copperfield*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Great Expectations*. Today we can pick up

any of his works in book form and read the entire story all at once. Originally, however, these stories were presented to the public in **serial** form: published in magazines one chapter at a time, a week or a month apart. Dickens' readers waited breathlessly for the next issue to find out what would happen in the story—much as we look forward

now to the next episode of our favorite television series.

The Uncommercial Traveler is a collection of magazine essays and articles Dickens wrote between 1860 and 1869. In chapter 15, entitled "Nurse's Stories," the author recalls the scary bedtime stories his **nurse** used to tell him when he was a boy. One of the most memorable stories was about an evil fellow named Captain Murderer. We won't give away the story here.... Just like Dickens' original readers, you'll have to wait to find out how the Captain earned his nickname and what became of him!

NURSE - in this case, a woman who looks after small children; a nanny



Find "Captain Murderer" online at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/d/dickens/charles/d54ut/chap15.html>
(We hope you'll wait until after the show to read it!)



BRIDES BEWARE!

- Dickens recognized Captain Murderer as a close relative of Bluebeard, a notorious character in French literature. For a different interpretation of the legend, read "Bluebeard," a sonnet by American poet Edna St. Vincent Millay. Then write your own Captain Murderer poem!
- After the performance, ask your classmates if they were frightened by the story of Captain Murderer. Are there things our ancestors were frightened of that no longer scare us? Why? Are there things that frightened you when you were young that don't scare you anymore? What scares you the most now?

YOUR

"Where there is no imagination
there is no horror."
—Arthur Conan Doyle

Activities



Working with a classmate, tell the plot of your favorite scary story to the rest of the class. Try to frighten everyone.

Working in a small group, choose one of the characters from a story you heard in *Gothic at Midnight*. Pretend that this character is holding a news conference. One person plays the fictional character while the others play journalists covering the event. Each "journalist" should create a list of questions to ask the interview subject. Hold your press conference in front of the rest of the class.



Using your computer, create a blog or a "MySpace" page for one of the characters in *Gothic at Midnight*.

Do you know the meaning of all the "horrible" words in the list on the right? Look up any you're not sure about. Can you add any words to the list?



Watch one of the horror films from the list below, or choose one on your own. (Try to pick a film you've never seen before.) As you're watching, make a list of all the classic elements of horror you notice. Use the checklist at right as a reference.

- *Nosferatu* (1922)
- *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925)
- *Frankenstein* (1931)
- *The Old Dark House* (1932)
- *Cat People* (1942)
- *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)
- *Psycho* (1960)
- *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961)
- *The Haunting* (1963)
- *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)
- *Rosemary's Baby* (1968)
- *Carrie* (1976)
- *The Shining* (1980)
- *The Sixth Sense* (1999)

HORRIBLE LANGUAGE

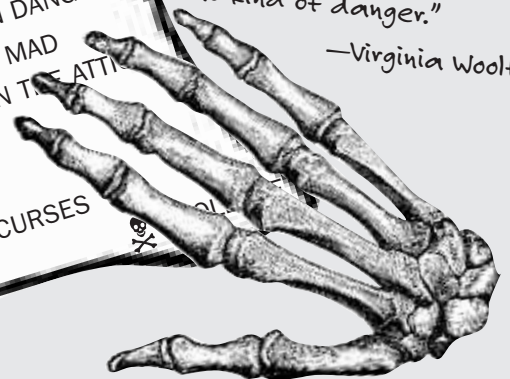
- AGONY
- AMORAL/IMMORAL
- BLOODCURDLING
- CHILLING
- CREEPY
- DESOLATE
- DESPAIR
- GOthic
- GROTESQUE
- GRUESOME
- HORROR
- ISOLATED
- MACABRE
- MADNESS/INSANITY
- MORBID
- MYSTERIOUS
- OBSESSION
- PARANOIA
- SINISTER
- SUPERNATURAL
- SUSPENSE
- TERROR
- THRILLER
- TORTURE

THE ELEMENTS OF HORROR

- MYSTERY
- SUSPENSE
- GHOSTS/THE SUPERNATURAL
- MONSTERS
- HAUNTED HOUSE/CASTLE
- PSYCHOLOGICAL TERROR
- PHYSICAL TERROR
- HELPLESS FEMALES IN DANGER
- MADNESS/INSANITY; MAD
- RELATIVE LOCKED IN THE ATTIC
- DARKNESS
- SECRETS
- FAMILY CURSES

"It is pleasant to be afraid when we are conscious that we are in no kind of danger."

—Virginia Woolf



A WORD TO OUR AUDIENCE...

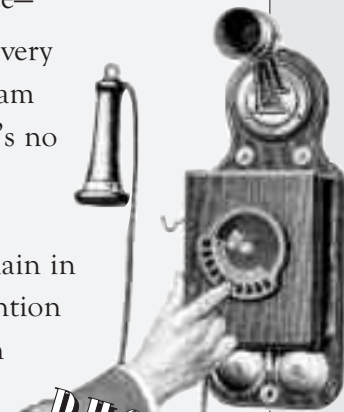
Dear *Gothic at Midnight* Audience—

A live theater performance is very different from a television program or a movie. For one thing, there's no rewind button, so if you miss something, it's gone for good. That's why it's important to remain in your seat and focus all your attention on the stage while the show is in progress.

Live theater can be an electrifying experience. Just like an electrical current, however, the light goes on only when there's an uninterrupted flow of energy between the actors and the audience. Talking during the play—either to the people onstage or the people around you—will break the spell that the actors are working so hard to create. Ringing cell phones and flashing cameras can also spoil a performance, so please remember to turn them off and put them away during the show.

I hope *Gothic at Midnight* gives you a good scare and perhaps a laugh or two. See you at the State Theatre!

Your friend,
Joshua Kane



PHONE OFF!



NO PHOTOGRAPHY!



FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

BOOKS:

The Complete Ghost Stories of Charles Dickens, edited by Peter Haining. Franklin Watts, 1983.

Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin, by Richard Davenport Hines. North Point Press/Farrar, Straus, 1998.

A Kayak Full of Ghosts: Eskimo Tales, edited by Lawrence Millman. Interlink, 2003.

The Portable Poe, selected, edited and with an introduction and notes by Philip Van Doren Stern. Viking, 1945.

WEBSITES:

Joshua Kane
www.joshuakane.com

The Gothic Novel
<http://cai.ucdavis.edu/waters-sites/gothicnovel/155breport.html>

The Literary Gothic - a web guide to Gothic literature
www.litgothic.com



key notes

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Education

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