

Stage Fright Sensation 'Ghost Stories' Premieres

By [Maximilian Gill](#)

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Show creators Andy Nyman and Jeremy Dyson came to Moscow last week for the "Ghost Stories" premiere. **Maximilian Gill**

London West End smash hit "Ghost Stories" has shifted to Moscow in hopes of terrifying audiences here.

In Britain, the show was seen by more than 200,000 people, playing at the Duke of York's theater from June 2010 to July 2011.

Posters have appeared all over Moscow in the past few weeks asking people if they are brave enough to see the show.

Much of the hype surrounding the show comes from the mystery of its content. Publicity photos consist only of audience-reaction shots, and on leaving audiences are urged to keep the secrets of "Ghost Stories" to themselves.

The 80-minute spectacle, which is not advised for children under 16, the mentally unstable, or pregnant women, is the brainchild of Andy Nyman and Jeremy Dyson.

Nyman is best known as the co-creator and director of many of British Illusionist Derren Brown's hit plays, including "Trick of the Mind," "Russian Roulette" and "Something Wicked This Way Comes," for which he was awarded an Oliver Award in 2006.

He played the central role in "Ghost Stories" during its British run and is set to appear in the Hollywood movie "Kick Ass 2."

Dyson is a writer famed for his involvement in the cult television comedy "The League of Gentlemen."

Both were in Moscow last Friday for the play's premiere at Yauza Palace. The show, entirely recast and translated into Russian, is otherwise "exactly the same as in the U.K.," Nyman told The Moscow Times.

"We hope that we will be able to scare audiences here in Russia," he said. "They don't have the same tradition of ghosts, so it will be interesting to see their reaction."

"I think we can scare them" Dyson added.

Both described being in Moscow with the show as "totally overwhelming," and they praised the "brilliant" work of director Kirill Sbitnev and production company Oh Project, which specializes in bringing foreign shows to Russia.

"I think when the Russian producers came in London, they just loved the madness of it all," Nyman said.

Certainly, it is a show unlike any other Russian audiences are likely to have seen before. The stately Yauza Palace has been completely transformed by the producers. Cobwebs, macabre mannequins and caution tape fill the theater's every nook and cranny. Ghostly sound effects of groans and dripping water greet spectators as soon as they enter the building.

Without revealing too much, the show begins as a lecture from a professor on the existence of ghosts and our human curiosity toward them. Why have we come to see the show? Why do we so want to see that which terrifies us? Needless to say, the action soon heats up, with three ghost stories enacted as part of the lecture. Of course, by the end, all is not what it seems.

The play is a very pleasing mix of comedy and horror, and it is technically astounding.

"I thought the actors did an absolutely fantastic job," Nyman said after the show.

What the creators did not expect however, was the more involved attitude to theater that Russians have in comparison to counterparts in Britain, which Nyman and Dyson initially found "bizarre."

At times, audience members were very vocal. Yet instead of causing distractions, this added to the drama of the piece, creating an atmosphere of hysteria in the auditorium and enforcing the lack of a fourth wall between the action and spectators that the figure of the professor

initially establishes.

Gleb Isakov, a student from Moscow, found the show "totally different from anything I had seen before. I really enjoyed the mixture of genres, which was entertaining but also made you feel uneasy. You never knew what was going to happen next."

"Some parts I found a bit predictable, but that didn't stop me from hiding behind my coat," said Ira, a Moscow lawyer.

"Ghost Stories" is playing at Yauza Palace. 1 Ploshchad Zhuravlyova. Metro Elektrozavodskaya. www.yauza-palace.ru, (495) 645-2245.

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