



serenbe playhouse
— academy —

An immersive theatrical thriller based on Washington Irving's iconic example
of Early American Fiction *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

THE *Sleepy Hollow* EXPERIENCE

Written by: Washington Irving | Adapted by: Kathryn Schultz Miller
Re-Imagined for Serenbe Playhouse & Directed by: Brian Clowdus



EDUCATION GUIDE

Best suited for Students
Grades 6-12

A teacher guide for schools & homeschool groups preparing to see Serenbe Playhouse's
production of *The Sleepy Hollow Experience*

How to be a Successful Audience Member

We at Serenbe Playhouse produce engaging and unforgettable immersive theatre experiences for fieldtrips. You can expect vibrant productions of compelling and classic stories that offer a day to remember. We are dedicated to doing everything within our power to ensure the best possible experience for your day with us at Serenbe Playhouse, but you can help too! Encourage students and chaperones alike to be successful audience members.

Before the Play

- Be sure to **check the weather** and dress so as to be comfortable in the current outdoor temperature.
- **Wear comfortable shoes**, as locations of productions may require a brief hike.
- **Turn your cell phone OFF. Not on silent or vibrate, but OFF.** Texting or browsing, while a silent activity, is still considered to be a distracting and rude behavior in the theatre. So remove the temptation and turn it off for an hour or two. You and your students can thank us for the relaxing time away from technology later.

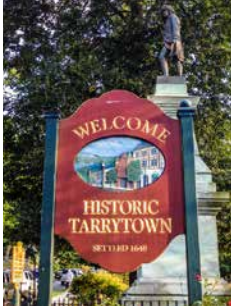
During the Play

- **Don't miss a moment.** Live theatre is full of tiny moments, unlike tv and film that chooses what the audience sees with close-ups, in theatre you can watch anyone at any time! You will see lots of funny and interesting moments if you stay engaged with all the actors in the play at all times. If something is boring, look somewhere else, you are sure to be entertained!
- **React to the play!** Our actors want you to laugh, cry, and applaud. A live theatre performance is greatly improved by an engaged audience.
- That being said, being a professional actor requires an enormous amount of concentration. **Please respect the actors and your fellow audience members by not talking during the performance.** Unlike a movie, the actors in theatre can hear you if you talk.
- **Teachers are the best example!** Chaperones exhibiting strong theatre etiquette set the tone for the entire field trip. We encourage all our chaperones to lead by example.

After the Play

- Although talking during the performance is distracting to the performers, crew and your fellow audience members, **discussions after the play** are the best thing you can do! Discuss what you liked about the play and what you didn't like, how our production was similar or different from the original literary work or other adaptations, or about the costumes, acting and set. If art analysis doesn't come naturally, you can utilize our guided questions to facilitate thoughtful conversation. Art only truly comes alive when it is interpreted by the audience! The after is just as important as the during in theatre... So discuss away!

Synopsis of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*



Our story takes place in the countryside of New York in 1790 near the Dutch settlement of the historical Tarrytown, in a secluded and narrow valley called Sleepy Hollow. The still little village is notorious for its

unnerving atmosphere, hauntings and alleged apparitions.

"There was a contagion in the very air that blew from that haunted region; it breathed forth an atmosphere of dreams and fancies infecting all the land."

-THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

Some residents claim the eerie town was bewitched by a German doctor since the early days of the Dutch settlement. Others claim still that, even before the town was settled by Europeans, a magical Native American chief held powwows there that still haunt the land. Among the other countless spooky myths and legends igniting the imaginations of the inhabitants of Sleepy Hollow, the most celebrated and notorious spectre is found in the tale of the Headless Horseman. Rumored to be the spirit of a German Soldier whose head was blown off by a stray cannonball during "some nameless battle" of the American Revolutionary War,



the Headless Horseman haunts the town by night in a never-ending search for his renegade cranium.

Quickly we meet a recent transplant to Sleepy Hollow, Ichabod Crane, a gaunt and gangly schoolmaster from Connecticut who has an extensive superstitious streak.



In town, the gorgeous, intelligent, and flirty Katrina Van Tassel (only daughter to an extremely wealthy farmer and sole heir to his rich lands) catches the romantic attentions of Ichabod Crane; and so Crane aspires to marry Katrina... and her wealth. There is only one catch to Ichabod's plan to woo Katrina and her inheritance (well aside from Katrina's opinion on the whole idea...); a brazen, burly, and broad-shouldered man with a playful yet arrogant nature, named Abraham "Brom Bones", who is also vying for the hand of 18-year-old Katrina Van Tassel.



As the rivalry for Katrina (or is it really her wealth) heats up between the men, Brom plays a series of pranks on the jittery schoolmaster in an attempt to gain the upper-hand.

"Ichabod became the object of whimsical persecution to Bones and his gang of rough riders...But what was still more annoying, Brom took all opportunities of turning him into ridicule in the presence of his mistress..."

- THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW



The tension between the men builds until, on a pristine autumn night, Crane with ambitions to finally propose to Katrina, attends a harvest party at

the Van Tassels' house. He eats excessively, dances wildly, and as the night goes on, tall tales of the residents from the Revolutionary war warp into ghostly legends told by Brom and the locals. As the party ends, Ichabod fails to secure Katrina's hand, and he rides quickly home on his horse, defeated "with an air quite desolate and chapfallen".

As Ichabod rides through Sleepy Hollow he begins to pass by several of the haunted locations, and his superstitious imagination runs wild with the spine-chilling stories from the party. His eyes and ears play



tricks on him as he rides through Sleepy Hollow, but as he approaches the covered bridge where the apparition of the Headless Horseman is rumored to frequent, a cloaked rider of enormous size appears by the swamp Ichabod rides through. Unnerved by his fellow traveler's eerie size and mysterious silence, the school teacher tries to play it cool, but is soon terrified to discover that the rider's head is not on his shoulders, but on his saddle. Ichabod rides for dear life on his finicky and slow plough horse named Gunpowder, hoping to outrun the Headless Horseman to safety though the covered bridge, where the apparition is rumored to vanish in flame and fire. But before Ichabod can make it out, the Headless Horseman hurls his severed head at Ichabod...

"Ichabod endeavored to dodge the horrible missile, but too late. It encountered his cranium with a tremendous crash – he was tumbled headlong into the dust, and Gunpowder, the black steed, and the goblin rider, passed by like a whirlwind."

- THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

Morning, noon and night roll by the next day, and Ichabod is nowhere to be found. A search commences by the townspeople, and only Gunpowder (Ichabod's horse) can be found, without saddle. A further search reveals a trampled saddle by the covered bridge, and the tracks of horses leading to a small stream, where mysteriously Ichabod's hat floats in the black water and the remnants of a smashed pumpkin lie in shards nearby. Soon, as the clues refuse to reveal an answer, the unsolved mystery of Ichabod Crane becomes another tale of the town. Katrina marries Brom, a skilled horse-rider himself, who is said "to look exceedingly knowing whenever the story of Ichabod was related." And although an old farmer visiting Sleepy Hollow claims Ichabod ran off in shame and fear and was now a lawyer and politician elsewhere, our tale leaves us favoring the more disturbing opinion of the sleepy little housewives from the sleepy little town of Sleepy Hollow...



Photos by: BreeAnne Clowdus



Washington Irving

An American writer born on April 3, 1783 (in the last year of the American Revolutionary War) in New York City. Irving is best recognized for his short stories “*The Legend of*

Sleepy Hollow” and “*Rip Van Winkle*” and was dubbed the “first American man of letters” for his successful examples of early American writings.

He was a frail child, and the favorite and youngest (of eleven) to a serious merchant father and a warm mother. Raised in an atmosphere of indulgence, he was recorded to be an average student and was not required to go to college as his older brothers were, yet he held many academic and creative interests including writing, architecture, landscape design, diplomacy and intermittently studied on the topic of law.

Around 1802 Irving began writing satirical essays under various pen-names including the especially fun name “Diedrich Knickerbocker” and travelled extensively over the next few years through New England, Canada and Europe. Upon his return to New York he passed the bar exam and became a lawyer. He quickly resumed writing and wrote several very successful pieces until his writing was interrupted when he was incapacitated by the unexpected death of the woman he loved, Matilda Hoffman, in 1809.

For about 6 years, in the wake of Matilda’s death, Irving’s life had little direction, working as a lobbyist and then an editor and even a colonel during the War of 1812. It wasn’t until 1815, when he met respected Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott, who encouraged Irving to resume writing, that

he picked up the pen again. What resulted was *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* which was completed in 1819-20, and is the satirical and fanciful collection of short stories that brought us the iconic “*Rip Van Winkle*”, and of course “*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*”, which have since been considered the first American short stories.

The Sketch Book was a remarkable success in both the United States and England and allowed Irving to become a full-time writer, supporting himself with his writing. He continued to write and travel the world for much of the rest of his life, and he even spent brief time as a minister to Spain from 1842-1846. Many of his later works were inspired by his travels to Germany, Austria, France, Spain, the British Isles, and through the United States, as he continued to write on topics inspired by his world travels and observations.

He returned to New York in 1832, and lived the remainder of his life (when not traveling) at his home named “Sunnyside” in Tarrytown, the iconic home of Sleepy Hollow. He died on the eve of the Civil War on November 28, 1859. Washington Irving is buried in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, which surrounds the Old Dutch burying ground where the fictitious Ichabod Crane sought refuge and the actual graves of the real-life Katrina Van Tassel, Brom Bones, and others who likely inspired Irving’s characters in “*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*” lie.



About the Show

About *The Sleepy Hollow Experience*



Photo by: BreeAnne Clowdus

Setting:

The setting of *Sleepy Hollow*, New York, is significant because one of the story's major themes is the conflict between "country" people and "city" people. The original settlers of the Tarrytown area were Dutch, and they are depicted as strong, hearty farm people. Abraham "Brom Bones" Brunt and the Van Tassels are examples of these people. On the other hand, Ichabod Crane is an outsider from Connecticut. He is a Yankee – a city man with English ancestry.

*One of the challenges for our production of *The Sleepy Hollow Experience* is that the audience follows the actors through the woods. Our production takes place in five locations and utilizes a variety of special effects including lights, sound, fog, and animals.*

Cast & Characters of *The Sleepy Hollow Experience*:



Laura Floyd (*Storyteller*)

The Storytellers play a variety of characters throughout the show and lead the audience through the tale of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.



Daniel Burns (*Storyteller*)

The Storytellers play a variety of characters throughout the show and lead the audience through the tale of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.



Chris Mayers (*Ichabod Crane*)

Ichabod Crane, the itinerant schoolteacher of *Sleepy Hollow*, less a character than a caricature, grotesque in his physical appearance. He is very tall, with narrow shoulders and long arms that dangle out of his sleeves. Ichabod's most basic characteristic is his great hunger. A shrewd New Englander in the midst of simple Dutch farmers, Ichabod wants to swallow up the land that belongs to Katrina Van Tassel's father. His downfall is the result of his other appetite—his willingness to "swallow," or believe, everything about the marvelous and the supernatural. Because of his gullible appetite for the marvelous, he is frightened away from Katrina and *Sleepy Hollow* by Brom Bones, and the legendary Headless Horseman.



Jessica Miesel (*Katrina Van Tassel*)

Katrina Van Tassel, the only child of a wealthy Dutch farmer. At the age of eighteen, she is seen by the always hungry Ichabod as "plump as a partridge" and as ripe and rosy-cheeked as one of her father's peaches. Wearing a charming combination of Old and New World

clothing, Katrina is a bit of a flirt who has the "prettiest foot and ankle in the county." She is so deliciously irresistible to Ichabod that he wants to take her as his wife.



Justin Walker (*Abraham Van Brunt*)

Abraham Van Brunt, called Brom Bones, a strong and broad-shouldered man who is the hero of the countryside. He is famed for his horsemanship, his physical strength, and his love of tricks and merriment. He is always ready for a fight or a frolic. He is the leader of a small band of young men who look up to him as their model and with whom he rides throughout the countryside playing pranks and getting into brawls. He is also a suitor for the hand of Katrina and is jealous when she pays too much attention to Ichabod. His knowledge of Ichabod's gullibility enables him to frighten the greedy pedagogue away.

Understudies

An understudy is a performer who learns the lines and blocking/choreography of a regular actor or actress in a play. Should the regular actor or actress be unable to appear on stage, the understudy takes over the part.



Shelby Folks
(*Storyteller*)



Cherise James
(*Katrina Van Tassel*)



Shannon McCarren
(*Storyteller*)



David-Aaron Roth
(*Ichabod Crane*)



Terrence Smith
(*Abraham Van Brunt*)

Greed and Gluttony: Ichabod wants it all. The money, the girl... the food.

- **OPINION:** Why do you think Irving chose greed to be one of Ichabod's strongest character traits? Why not sloth or lust or some other fun deadly sin?
- **OBSERVATION:** Does anyone else in the story strike you as greedy, or does Ichabod stand out in this way?
- **OPTIONS:** How would the story change if Ichabod got the girl? What commentary would that outcome say about greed?
- **HYPOTHETICAL:** What would the story have looked like if Ichabod suffered from another one of the seven deadly sins? Pick one and explore.

The Supernatural: Magic and the Mundane

- **OPINION:** So... Magic or Mundane: Is *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* a proper ghost story or simply an old-wives tale? Back up your claim.
- **OBSERVATION:** There are differing accounts as to what happened to Ichabod Crane. What evidence is there that Ichabod's disappearance was Supernatural? What evidence is there that Ichabod's disappearance was **not** supernatural?
- **OPTIONS:** The Headless Horseman haunts Sleepy Hollow because he died during the American Revolutionary War. What kind of ghost would haunt a modern day Sleepy Hollow? Why?
- **HYPOTHETICAL:** If you were a ghost who and where would you haunt? Why? What would be your trademark spook?

Warfare: Images of war and battles haunt the pages of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* just as frequently as specters...

- **OPINION:** There is no actual warfare in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, so why are there so many mentions of battle, war, and knights? How does the undertone of war affect the story?
- **OBSERVATION:** Love is a battlefield for Ichabod and Brom... it doesn't seem to be about romance, it seems to be about winning the battle for Katrina. What were the war strategies and tactics each side used to further their advances to Katrina?
- **OPTIONS:** What would the story be like if the war references were replaced with romantic imagery?
- **HYPOTHETICAL:** Imagine *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* takes place in modern times. Find one quote in the story that references war, battle or soldiers and write your own translation of the text replacing the references to Colonial-era warfare with references to modern warfare. How do the images we know of modern war change the tone of the story?

Themes to Look For

Women in Colonial Society: Hard out here for a girl...

- **OPINION:** What roles do the women of Sleepy Hollow play in society? How is this different from modern times?
- **OBSERVATION:** Is Ichabod interested in Katrina for her personality, intellect, looks, or fortune? How is this demonstrated in the story?
- **OPTIONS:** How might *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* be different if it was told from Katrina's perspective? Would the ending be different?
- **HYPOTHETICAL:** We never actually learn what is said between Katrina and Ichabod at the night of the party. What does Katrina say to Ichabod when he asks her to marry him? Is she gentle, or harsh, or funny? Write her response when Ichabod pops the big question.

Truth: Fact or Fiction? You Decide

- **OPINION:** Do you trust the narrator? Why? Or why not? Why do you think Irving wrote the narrator to be this way?
- **OBSERVATION:** Who decides what the truth is in the Sleepy Hollow community? What is their role in the society of Sleepy Hollow and why do you speculate they have this power?
- **OPTIONS:** How would the story change if we knew for a fact that the events of the final haunting were 100% real? Adversely, what would change if we knew without a doubt that those events were absolutely fake?
- **HYPOTHETICAL:** There is an old Chinese proverb that recounts: "There are three truths: my truth, your truth and the truth." Pick a truth: Ichabod, Katrina or Brom! Choose a pivotal moment in the story and write or debate in class on Ichabod, Katrina or Brom's side of the story.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Legend of Sleepy Hollow is considered one of the first examples of American Gothic fiction! Washington Irving helped pave the way for authors like Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and later Southern Gothic icons Flannery O'Connor, William Faulkner and Harper Lee!



Photo by: BreeAnne Clowdus

Questions for before the performance

What do you expect...

1. How do you think Serenbe Playhouse will represent the Headless Horseman?
2. Will there be a narrator to tell the story of the play, like in the short story? If so, how do you think the narrator will theatrically help tell the story? If not, how will the story be shown without a narrator?
3. Music and psalms are very important to Ichabod Crane and are featured frequently in the short story. What role do you expect music to play in *The Sleepy Hollow Experience*?
4. Do you like the characters in the story? If so which ones and why? Do you expect to like the same characters in the play?
5. How do you expect an outdoor production to effect the feel and the tone of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*?
6. Have you seen live theatre before? If so do you enjoy it? If not, do you think you will enjoy it or not?

Questions for after the performance

What was delivered...

1. How did the Playhouse present the Headless Horseman? Did he live up to your imagination?
2. Was there a narrator in the production or not? Was the narration as effective or interesting as Washington Irving's writing?
3. How was music used in the production? What did it add or detract from the production? How did music and silence affect the mood of the play?
4. Which characters did you like in the play? Were you surprised by liking or not liking certain characters you expected to? What about the actor's performance contributed to these opinions?
5. Did the outdoor production change how you experienced the story of *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* from reading the book? If so, how? Did it help or hinder the story?
6. If you have seen live theatre before, how was this different from other live theatre you've seen? Did you enjoy the experience? If this was your first experience to live theatre, how did you feel about it? Either way how did your feelings compare to what you expected?

Useful Links: Media links to supplement learning about *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*

Audio Recording:

<http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/171/american-short-fiction/3446/the-legend-of-sleepy-hollow/>

Video: Top 10 Facts

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEAoBaot7OU>

Video: National Geographic

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jt1GWHS7zZE>

Video: Disney Short Animation

<http://rarehalloweenvideos.blogspot.com/2011/10/1955-legend-of-sleepy-hollow-with-intro.html>

About Serenbe Playhouse



Photo by: BreeAnne Clowdus

Serenbe Playhouse believes that theatre as an art form has the unique power to illuminate the human experience. In pursuit of that vision, we produce artistically rich site-specific performances and programming that reduces the barriers between artists and audiences by immersing patrons in an environment that amplifies the beauty of nature, and provides opportunities for engagement, conversation, and collaboration.

We use theatre as an artistic educational tool for both artists and audiences. A training ground for promising artists, the Playhouse offers high school students, college students, and recent graduates active opportunities to work alongside established theatre professionals. Serenbe Playhouse adheres to the philosophy that theatre is a necessity, not a privilege. Through targeted assistance to schools and youth organizations, the Playhouse broadens access to art and culture, and encourages the involvement of under served audiences throughout the region.

We are a pioneer in modeling Green Theatre Practices by producing plays with a commitment to social responsibility and environmental stewardship. All productions are performed outdoors, in concert with Nature; repurpose existing structures; and use natural light and 90% LED theatrical lighting. Sets are designed for disassembly and constructed with reclaimed and recycled materials with the goal of minimizing a production's waste and impact on the environment.

Serenbe Playhouse was founded in 2009 under the executive and artistic direction of Brian Clowdus, an accomplished actor, educator, director and producer. He earned a BA in Theatre & Dance from Amherst College graduating Magna Cum Laude, an MFA in Acting from The University of South Carolina, and is a 2011 Fellow of the world-renowned Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C. Established under the umbrella of their parent organization, The Serenbe Institute for Art Culture & the Environment, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, Serenbe Playhouse operates with the support of a diverse working board of directors and community volunteers.

Booking Information

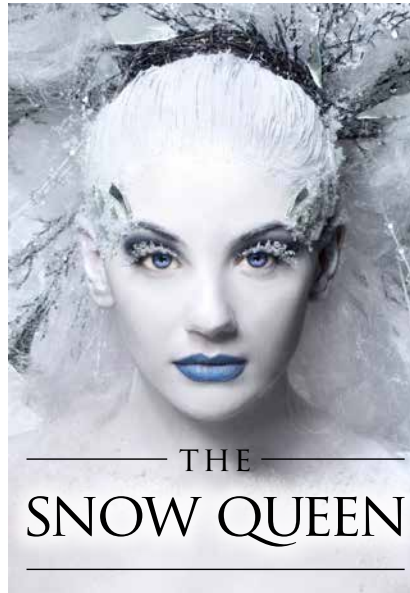
Upcoming Serenbe
Playhouse Shows



THE SLEEPY HOLLOW EXPERIENCE

October 7th, 8th, 14th, 15th,
21st, 22nd, 28th, & 29th, 2015

Flexible start times between
10AM & 2PM



THE SNOW QUEEN

December 8th, 9th, 10th,
15th, 16th, & 17th, 2015

Flexible start times between
10AM & 2PM



THE SECRET GARDEN

Tuesdays—Thursdays

Sept 1st—Dec 23rd, 2015

March 1st—May 5th, 2016

Flexible start times between
10AM & 2PM

DATES ARE LIMITED! FOR INFO AND BOOKING CONTACT:
education@serenbeplahouse.com

Coming in 2016

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JUNE 9 - JUNE 26

miss
S A I G O N
JULY 21 - AUGUST 7