Michael Sabbaton

Actor - Writer - Producer

Theatre for a Cult Audience

'Definitely the best Lovecraft adaptation. Ever'.
Fortean Times

'Movingly poetic and quietly terrifying…A chilling, mesmerising adaptation'.
Three Weeks

'Michael Sabbaton cycles from commanding through unsettling all the way to full-on disturbing, but is never short of captivating'.
The British Theatre Guide

'Sabbaton perfectly captures this descent into insanity.'
The List

'A strong creation of intense character'.
The Stage

'An arresting performance'.
The Scotsman

'Superbly acted and crafted...a captivating, powerhouse of a performance'.
The Reviews Hub

'Fantastically unique'.
North West End

'Highly original and engaging'.
Warped Perspective

'Sabbaton's performance is astonishing'.
The Public Reviews

'A masterclass in Tension'.
Harrogate Young Reviewers

'Has the audience hanging on his every word'.
New Welsh Review

'Atmospheric, engaging and on the edge of my seat throughout'.
AUDIENCE MEMBER

'Excellent! Truly original and by turns funny, moving and authentically creepy'.
AUDIENCE MEMBER

'Spellbinding, mesmerising and very, very original. Brilliant'.
AUDIENCE MEMBER

'What a superb and inventive piece of writing..Awesome..Please write more'.
AUDIENCE MEMBER

'Tour de force extrordinaire – enjoyed every SECOND of it'.
AUDIENCE MEMBER

'An absolute asset to the arts! Unbelievable'.
AUDIENCE MEMBER

Available for future touring

contact sabbaton@michaelsabbaton.com

Michael Sabbaton∞ Actor - Writer - Producer

Theatre for a Cult Audience

Michael Sabbaton is an actor continually fascinated with the workings of theatre and performance. He has been an academic, scenographer and designer as well as a performer and Associate Artist at Harrogate Theatre. He creates compelling and engaging characters living in worlds both familiar and strange.

As an actor and voice over artist, Michael has worked in a diverse range of performance fields, from physical theatre to classical Shakespeare, straight drama and site-specific performance.

Since 2010, Sabbaton has been developing his own brand of psychological theatre currently in the form of one man adaptations and original shows for the stage. Forever a fan of the science fiction fantasy and horror genre, the work of seminal horror writer H.P. Lovecraft has been hugely influential on Sabbaton. Because of this, adapting his writing to the stage in rhythm, space and action; in sound, sight and shadow seemed a likely partnership.

Through his ever expanding, 'Lovecraft Collection' and appealing to a cult audience across an expansive popular culture, Sabbaton brings this highly influential and sometimes forgotten writer to a wider theatre audience.

Alongside his Lovecraft adaptations, Sabbaton continues to push theatrical boundaries with totally original works that question, enthral and entertain whilst still holding true to this love of 'the weird'.

In Sabbaton's atmospheric and intimate theatre, this character driven world carries the cerebral, terror of the self and the decisions that make us who we are.

Building on a strong foundation of intense characterisation, light, shade and widely praised music and sound scaping, Sabbaton is building a loyal audience base across the UK, particularly in The North of England.

Previous work in 'The Lovecraft Collection', includes the four one man adaptations: *Polaris*, *The Statement of Randolph Carter*, *The Temple* and *The Call of Cthulhu.* This collection of Lovecraftian work will continue to grow as there are many future works in the pipeline.

In 2018/19, Sabbaton was awarded a grant from The Arts Council of England and, in co-production with Harrogate Theatre, produced, and toured, *The Turk* - an original piece with music and song inspired by the true story of an eighteenth century, chess playing automaton.

Sabbaton hopes to extend his theatre audience further with future original work pushing limits of space, sound and action.

Michael Sabbaton - theatre for a cult audience...
For details and bookings or just to have a chat (!), please feel free to get in touch via one of the portals, below.

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facebook @Sabbaton.Theatre
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'X'/twitter @Cthulhu_Play

What partners and colleagues say...

Michael Sabbaton ∞

Actor - Writer - Producer

Harrogate Theatre is delighted to be supporting and co-producing Michael Sabbaton's next project 'The Mechanical Turk'. We are proud to have a longstanding association with Michael and his work, and have hosted a number of his previous performances for runs in our Studio Theatre including Polaris, The Call of Cthulhu, The Temple, and The Statement of Randolph Carter which have all been received, without exception, with widespread audience and critical acclaim. His shows are characterised by an unrivalled commitment to authentic storytelling, enthralling performances and immersive and imaginative design that transport the audience member to weird and wonderful worlds, pleasing both his devotees and those new to his work alike. His next project is perhaps the most ambitious yet; bringing to the stage a story that will surely capture our imaginations, stimulate our curiosity and allow us to reflect and question what scientific and technological advances made in our modern age is saying about humans as cognitive and prescient beings, (artificial) intelligence, and our relationship with progress.

Harrogate Theatre will support Michael in bringing this project to the stage, as co-producers, through providing rehearsal space, technical support and premiering the show in Autumn 2018, but also in terms of access to the expertise of the Harrogate Theatre creative, production and marketing teams. We have no doubt that the resulting production of 'The Mechanical Turk' will be of the highest quality in the hands of Michael and his creative team, and we recognise the importance and relevance of this project in bringing to the stage a story guaranteed to question, enthral and transport its audiences.

We cannot recommend Michael Sabbaton and his work highly enough, and hope to continue our partnership with him for future projects to come.

Emma McDowell, August 2017
Associate Producer, Harrogate Theatre (until August 2017)
Harrogate (White Rose) Theatre Trust, Oxford Street, Harrogate, HG1 1QF

Michael has always enjoyed great success at The Lowry with his work both in terms of its artistic approach and its audiences. We very much look forward to seeing The Turk come to fruition and hope that you will consider supporting this application.

Matthew Eames, July 2017
Theatres Programmer and Producer
The Lowry, Salford Quays

During my time at Harrogate Theatre I developed a long standing relationship with Michael Sabbaton and his work. In my opinion Michael is one of the truly great solo performer and theatre makers working in the UK. His work adapting Lovecraft for the stage draws you in to this nightmare and strange world and via simple, yet highly effective, soundscapes and staging totally captivate you. It was heartening over the years I programmed his work to see a loyal audience develop as well as the 'word of mouth' grow with audiences equally as entranced in the work as I am.

Kevin Jamieson, July 2017
Senior Producer: Theatre
Home, Manchester

Michael Sabbaton has brought three shows to Square Chapel over the past few years and each have achieved good audiences with a loyal local following. The work is always of a high quality and strong identity, and Michael is a pleasure to deal with as an artist. We look forward to supporting and hosting his next show, The Turk, which we feel will be a great fit for our new studio space and will appeal to both new and returning audiences.

Alison Ford, July 2017
Producer and Theatre Programmer
Square Chapel, Centre for the Arts, Halifax

I was fortunate to work with Michael on our recent production at Harrogate Theatre. Michael stepped in to take a key role in the production at very short notice due to illness of another cast member. Michael's commitment to the role - his enthusiasm, good humour, and intelligence - were crucial in us being able to bring a successful production to the stage. The audience feedback on what Michael brought to the show was some of the most positive I have seen for a production. I wholeheartedly support any creative project Michael is involved in.

Rob Johnston, August 2017
Writer and Director

What the audience say...

"Sabbaton perfectly captures this descent into insanity"
The List

"Movingly poetic and quietly terrifying. A chilling, mesmerising adaptation"
Three Weeks

"Definitely the best Lovecraft adaptation. Ever"
Fortean Times

I'm literary editor for Starburst Magazine I think Sabbaton's work brings awareness of less known literature to a broader audience.

Ed Fortune - Literary Editor, Starburst Magazine, August 2017
Audience Member

I have been lucky enough to have been in the audience of several of Michael sabbaton's plays at Square Chapel, Halifax. He offers wonderfully innovative and perfectly reimagined work in which many parts are performed solo. Michael crafts all of his own props and provides YouTube videos of the preparatory work for his many, loyal followers. The Lovecraftian world is very much loved by many people and as far as I know, there is no-one else doing what Michael does. His audiences at Square Chapel are always full. I look forward to many more productions.

Cat Bowles, August 2017
Audience Member

I've had the pleasure of seeing Michael Sabbaton perform on 3 occasions now and his on-stage presence is incredible. He managed to not only inhabit the audience into the very depths of madness with his countless representations of Cthulhu, but also created a place of sheer horror with the simplest utterance of one of his many characters H.P. Lovecraft's work has never been in safer hands. Simple sets, powerful audio and visuals all combine o an horrific and spell-binding performance.

Brioche, August 2017
Audience Member

Sabbaton - Genius. I have been reading the works of H.P. Lovecraft for many years and I never thought that a live show would ever be able to capture the feeling and power of the stories let alone one man in a studio in Harrogate acting it out just feet away from the front row…how wrong I was. Sabbaton's adaptations of some of Lovecraft's finest works are nothing short of pure brilliance. This is one man on a stage playing all roles and from the moment the performance starts to the moment he leaves the stage every single person in the audience is locked on his every movement and word. The work he puts in from developing an idea into props and music through to the performance is mind blowing…genius.

Gareth Dibble, August 2017
Audience Member

I have been lucky enough to see three of Michael Sabbaton's performances, and while each was distinct and unique, they had three unifying characteristics. Firstly, they were all drawn from the work of of the legendary horror author H.P. Lovecraft, though they varied from painstakingly faithful adaptations to speculative, largely original works that used Lovecraft as a creative springboard. Secondly, they were one man shows - not just a technical feat, but also something which gave all three pieces a distinct, personal quality. Which leads onto the third characteristic all three were memorably compelling from beginning to end. I confess I had some reservations before attending the first performance - some of the worst plays I've sat through have been self-indulgent solo performances. But I left every one of the Michael sabbaton plays I attended with both a new appreciation for Lovecraft and a fresh enthusiasm for theatre.

Gavin Braddeley - author and journalist, August 2017
Audience Member

I came to see your fabulous production of The Temple at Hemel Hempstead. I don't usually have the urge to write after seeing a play but I was compelled to send you a little message to let you know how much I enjoyed the whole production. The multiple characters you displayed before our very eyes were captivating (frightening!) and the soundscape really encapsulated the H.P. Lovecraft atmosphere perfectly. Please keep doing what you're doing. It's a joy to watch.

Jonathan, August 2017
Audience Member

More of what the audience say...

"Sabbaton presents the captain's demise and horror so that we feel his choking isolation"
The Public Reviews

"An accomplished actor in a seamless production"
The Public Reviews

"Sabbaton's intense performance brings out the claustrophobic sense of being trapped"
What's on Stage

I first saw Michael presenting his H.P. Lovecraft Chronicles on Friday 26th October 2012 at The Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead. This was a double bill of his The Call of Cthulhu and The Temple shows. I had never seen a one man show before and I was unfamiliar with H.P. Lovecraft's writings, so I was unsure what to expect. It was such a good evening only made better after two performances Michael was available after the show to talk with interested audience members. I was very impressed by Michael's performance, his commitment to the material and his attention to detail. It was chilling and atmospheric, utterly spellbinding. I was hooked and hungry for more, I have made a concerted effort to see each one of Michael's shows all of which I have enjoyed. Talking to Michael I was impressed to find he had done so much of the work himself, writing and researching. The building of the sets and props, the lighting, sound and such atmospheric music. The promotional material is of a very high quality flyers and posters very well designed some of which I still have. I also have the audio CD versions of The Temple & the Call of Cthulhu both excellent and listened to regularly.

His use of social media is quite comprehensive; this keeps me up to date with upcoming projects when and where I can see the next show. I am also a fan of 'Sab's Shed' the behind the seenes YouTube vlog series giving people a peak into the theatre arts and Michael's creative process.

Nick Marsh, August 2017
Audience Member

Michael Sabbaton's shows are phenomenal. So much thought is put into every detail of the performance, from the haunting soundscapes to the smallest of props, that complete immersion is guaranteed Impressive stage décor aside, Sabbaton's actual performance is powerful. Lines are delivered loaded with emotion and are parsed with fascinating moments of wordless story-telling. Lovecraft stories are wonderfully adapted for the stage amplifying the desperate feelings of isolation, fear and the creeping loss of rational thought as the eldritch horrors descend.

Carly Davies, August 2017
Audience Member

Michael Sabbaton's work bringing the writing of acclaimed author H. P. Lovecraft to a theatrical audience is to be highly commended and recommended. Lovecraft's work is an intense and claustrophobic experience, one that draws you in and makes you question everything you believe in and hold dear. Sabbaton's production of The Call of Cthulhu is all that and more. The palpable terror of being in the presence of these characters, driven to the edge and beyond, calls for steady nerves, but is without doubt an experience, vastly rewarding and cathartic. Horror is beyond doubt an important, if often overlooked, genre of theatre, one that helps us examine the true fears in our world by creating mythic ones that require us to be more than our parts if we are to prevail against them. In a world where we are bombarded by images of poverty, war and greed to the point of desensitisation, work such as this reminds of our responsibly to each other. If we pull together, there is little we cannot achieve, but if we falter or flee, the walls come tumbling down.

Being scared is good for the mind and the body. It clears away the fog of separation from truths we would rather ignore, bringing home the important things that bind us together, while simultaneously providing an all-important escape from them, this seemingly incompatible and perhaps impossible sounding effect can be caused by few other immersions into theatre. Teetering on the edge of the abyss could hardly be in more capable hands than Sabbaton's.

Adrian Barber, 2013
Audience Member

Phenomenal performance. The way that songs created narrative history was brilliant. Loved atmosphere and sound track.
Audience Member

Funny, atmospheric, philosophical, manic, a twisting and turning trip into the nexus of science and alchemy, Outstanding.
Audience Member

Great performance, very interesting subject. Overall an excellent evening. Really enjoyed musical and comic interludes, spliced with the fractured mind of Johann Maelzel.
Audience Member

"Sabbaton becomes Lovecraft's expressive vessel whilst adding his own performed insanity"
New Welsh Review

More and more of what the audience say...

"A masterclass in tension...his characterisation is impeccable"
Harrogate Theatre Young Reviewers

"Sabbaton has the audience hanging on his every word"
What's on Live

I first stumbled across Michael Sabbaton at Harrogate theatre in Oct last year having been drawn in by the lure of seeing Lovecraft's work transition into theatre. I had no idea what to expect from a one-man show of said writing as the concept is ambitious to say the least. I chuckled in the bar with my partner at the prospect of this show being abysmal if handled badly. As a performer myself I like to believe I have an informed perspective on drama. My partner was (then) not enthused with theatre but an avid fan of Lovecraftian horror. I warned him we should proceed with low expectations as it would be unfair to compare Sabbaton's performance with the expansive products of our imaginations as invoked by the Great Scribe himself. How wrong we were.

Sabbaton's performance was gripping from the offset and the energy inside that tiny space was thick and potent. It was delightful and painful to watch and I literally found myself on the edge of my chair within the first ten minutes, straining to take in every detail which was loaded with meaning. To say The Temple and Call of Cthulhu were chilling is a gross understatement; The Temple in particular was probably the most gripping and intense piece of theatre I have ever seen and I will never forget. Sabbaton's ability to shift between personalities in The Call of Cthulhu and the idiosyncrasies infused in each character were astounding. I would love to see him bring more of these fluctuating subjects to life.

As soon as he began you could tell what a skilled actor you had in front of you. He'd really wheedled out the characters and fleshed them into being in all their snivelling, bitter and tormented glory. I have since gone back and re-read both the stories and am now unable to picture anything other than Sabbaton's portrayals - so perfectly pitched they were. The degeneration of the Sailor's psyche was morbidly fascinating and the mole-like whimpering artist in Call of Cthulhu was cringe-worthily satisfying. The narratives were faithful to Lovecraft's originals, compelling but not overly complex and imbued with a raw power that only live theatre can create. At moments it literally made your skin crawl, especially the climactic moment in Temple when Sabbaton was a man possessed. The dim lighting and the resulting 'tracing' of his flailed movements and guttural sounds really did look like a creature in the throes of transmogrification. The small auditorium was perfect for the claustrophobic ambience and music was subtle and eerie adding to the suggestive weirdness lurking in the shadowy corners.

I would relish the opportunity to see Michael Sabbaton give the same treatment to more stage shows, whether of Lovecraftian origin or not. I have never seen one performer deliver such a powerful piece of drama with the same levels of physical and psychological stamina. He has worked alongside a master and unleashed dark and distressing motifs essential to our understanding of the human psyche whilst accessing a breed of horror that it timeless and vital. Real catharsis and affective drama is so badly needed in our sanitised reality and its clear Sabbaton has worked relentlessly to deliver just that. It is art that facilitates a two-way flow between spectator and performer, both immersive and dynamic. Needless to say, my partner was left gob-smacked and it's made getting him to the theatre a much easier task. Unfortunately the calibres of plays we've found haven't come close to matching the pint sized death-punch Sabbaton delivered to our third eyes.

Many Thanks.

Stef Fetterman, 2013
Audience Member

Excellent – really enjoyed the concept. Amazing acting and loved the music. Gripping throughout! (also great sideburns)..."
Audience Member

Michael Sabbaton was able to exploit the subject matter and put it across using amazing technique to do so. He employed a veritable army of means to engage our interest, using voice, physicality, variation in pace, light and shade of attack in what in the end was a myriad of approaches, all the time not losing the essence of the piece. God knows how he was able to tabulate all that in his mind for such a long period of playing time amazes me.
Audience Member

Thanks for top Turking. Brilliant doings. I was gripped continuously by the slew between the raving rants and lucid language. The songs slid in really well even sometimes with a unimpeachable incongruity. The lyrics coloured the pictures that monologue might not and allowed an emotional reset and relief.
Audience Member

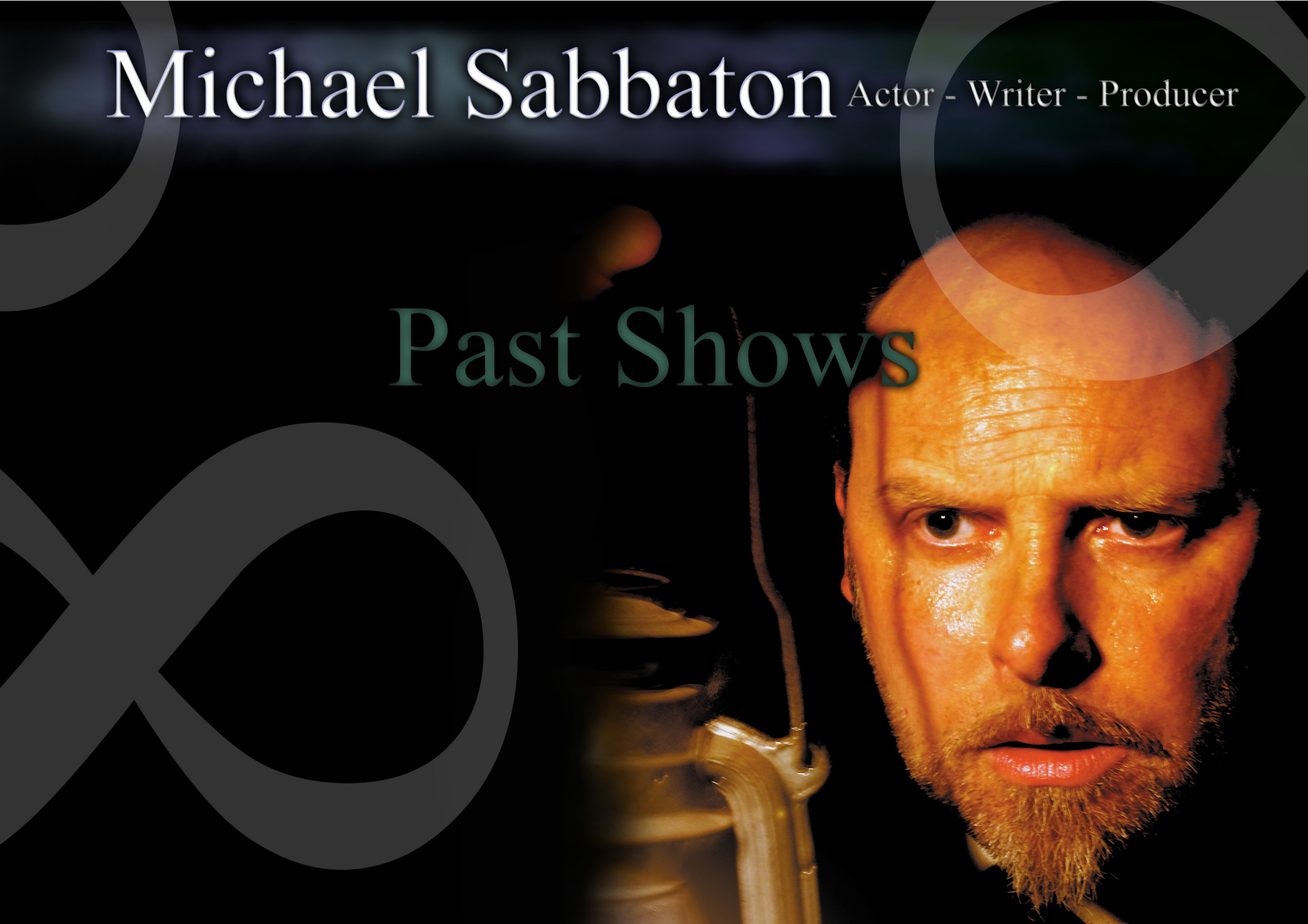
Spectacular. Most believable. Excellent performance.
Audience Member

Forth time of seeing Michael now and didn't disappoint again. A superb performance delivered brilliantly and believably. Thanks :)
Audience Member

Michael Sabbaton

Actor - Writer - Producer

Past Shows



Michael Sabbaton ∞

The Call of Cthulhu

based on H.P. Lovecraft's classic tale of untold horror

The Story

H.P. Lovecraft's classic tale of unknown horror adapted for the stage. Based on the original story from 1926, *The Call of Cthulhu* creates the seminal horror world of science fiction terror that has widely appealed to cult audiences across an expansive popular culture...

Rhode Island, 1936. On the edge of madness, Francis Thurston lives with the events of ten years past. Isolated from the world and hiding in fear, his only companion is an unspeakable terror kept locked in a box. A constant reminder of the lurking beast...

Night after night, Francis plays through the same story. The same people haunting his dreams. The same words. The same fear. Francis laughs…

Henry Wilcox…the artist who made the sculpture.
Professor Angell…the teacher of linguistics.
John Legrasse…the police detective.
Castro…the swamp cultist.
Gustav Johansen…the sailor.

All cursed.

Night after night the madness descends. Night after night, the creature speaks,

Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'Lyeh wgah'nagl fhatagn

" In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming…"

"Is madness preferable to death..."

"Sabbaton perfectly captures this descent into insanity"
The List

"Movingly poetic and quietly terrifying. A chilling, mesmerising adaptation"
Three Weeks

"Definitely the best Lovecraft adaptation. Ever"
Fortean Times

The Show

Adapted and performed by Michael Sabbaton and part of 'The Lovecraft Collection', this is HP Lovecraft's classic tale of untold terror from beyond. *The Call of Cthulhu* is a fearful 'Pandora's box' of the mind. Weaving the tale through these complex recesses of human fear and sanity, Sabbaton creates a character-driven world of compelling action.

Contains some strong language and material.



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Michael Sabbaton ∞

The Temple

based on H.P. Lovecraft's undersea tale of possession and madness

"Sabbaton presents the captain's demise and horror so that we feel his choking isolation"
The Public Reviews

"An accomplished actor in a seamless production"
The Public Reviews

"Sabbaton's intense performance brings out the claustrophobic sense of being trapped"
What's on Stage

The Story

Originally written in 1920 by H.P. Lovecraft, *The Temple* predates contemporary stories such as *Alien* and *Event Horizon* but establishes familiar thematic lines of the unknown, madness and unseen horror...

It is 1917. A strange ivory, carved head comes into the possession of Lt. Comm. Karl Altberg of the imperial German submarine, U-29. The boat becomes cursed as it is drawn into a spiralling descent of dissention and madness. Nightmares, weird feelings and visions of dead sailors begin to haunt the crew. An explosion permanently disables the U-boat's ability to surface and as it is pulled to the depths by an uncharted, underwater current a demonic, siren song begins to drive the crew towards insanity and death.

Left alone with his crumbling 'iron, German will', Altberg tries to resist the growing madness but as the U-29 finally reaches the sea bottom the source of the calling comes into view. Through the gloom, an 'Atlantian' temple reaches out. Finally unable to resist, he resigns himself to his watery fate and as he grasps the airlock lever, gives himself to the deep.

The submarine fills with water.
The light of The Temple breaks through.
It's beautiful…

"Aus der tiefe ruf ich zu dir, o Vater. Vater, höre meine stimme..."

The Show

Adapted and performed by Michael Sabbaton and part of 'The Lovecraft Collection', *The Temple* creates a dark theatre world of claustrophobic terror and human paranoia. Set in a submarine airlock, the tightness of the physical space reflects the mental space of the crumbling mind as we probe into the dark recesses of Altberg's deadly arrogance, vanity and pride.

Contains some strong material.



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Michael Sabbaton ∞

"An impressive and emotive performance...Sabbaton's timing was impeccable."
The Culture Vulture

"Excellent use of theatrical atmosphere."
The Public Reviews

The Statement of Randolph Carter

based on H.P. Lovecraft's subterranean horror of forbidden knowledge

"Sabbaton's characters insidiously creep into our psyche."
The Aftershow Review

The Story

Exterior. Night...
In the hot, Florida summer of 1920, the strange occultist, Harley Warren, ventures deep underground. With only the dimming light of his lantern to guide him, he feels for the damp, moulding steps that mark his descent. The corpse rich smell of hideous entombment forces him to wretch but still he descends. The lantern picks out the muddied details of the crumbling walls. Strange inscriptions in a hideous language? Alien symbols and strange beasts? Scratch marks? Ha! At last he has found it. The right place...the right time...Yesss, the ceremony must begin.

On the surface Warren's assistant, Randolph Carter, listens to his mentor's progress through a field telephone and his own mounting fear. For five years he has followed Warren. Known his secrets and studied from his cursed library. Why? Why did he do it? Why did he have to get involved? This is real now. How could he let it happen?

"Curiosity killed the cat', they say".

Wait. Was that a scream? Yes...Oh God! It's Warren...

The Show

Adapted and performed by Michael Sabbaton and the third of 'The Lovecraft Collection'. *The Statement* tells a tale of forbidden knowledge and of the lengths we go to reach beyond our immediate grasp.

A warning...A parable...A dark journey into the occult. *The Statement* is one of Lovecraft's most famous tales reflecting our own splintered sense of identity and our need to justify our very being

Running time 60 minutes.
Contains some strong material.



"If knowledge is the key, wisdom is the jailer..."

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Michael Sabbaton ∞

Polaris

based on H.P. Lovecraft's epic tale of fragmented reality

"A masterclass in tension...his characterisation is impeccable"
Harrogate Theatre Young Reviewers

"Sabbaton becomes Lovecraft's expressive vessel whilst adding his own performed insanity"
New Welsh Review

"Sabbaton has the audience hanging on his every word"
What's on Live

The Story

First written in 1918, Polaris is the first in Lovecraft's 'dream cycle'. Time and space are warped as worlds, at first clear and defined, become malleable and strange in this cult, science fiction horror predating other, contemporary works such as Moon, Prometheus and Total Recall…

1920. In a Louisiana swamp, a man disturbed by recent events and too afraid to sleep begins to relive his nightmare. All around there is a strange aurora of light. The man anxiously stares into the dark sky above and through the vapour-soaked trees the pole star, Polaris, winks hideously, striving to convey some strange message of the man's ancient, ancestral past.

Falling under the star's hypnotic spell, he travels through dreams of twisted realities finally arriving at a threatened city in a strange, pre-historic, arctic land. Strange people, creatures and 'alien gods' reveal themselves as the man loses himself in the world that has now become his own. Torn between identities and struggling to hold on to an ever crumbling sanity, the man must defend the city and his own sense of self as an unseen enemy draws ever near. What is real? Who are we? How can we be sure if we are all truly awake...

"Slumber watcher till the spheres, six and twenty thousand years..."

The Show

Adapted and performed by Michael Sabbaton and part of 'The Lovecraft Collection', Polaris depicts the horror of a reality shattered and an existence in turmoil. One of Lovecraft's earliest works, Polaris brings the same qualities of dark mystery, suspense and science fiction 'horror' that Lovecraft has become known for, questioning concepts of fear, the unknown and our own very existence.

Contains some strong material.

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Michael Sabbaton ∞

The Turk

Inspired by the true story of an 18th century 'thinking machine'

***** "A facinating piece of theatre"*
The Greater Manchester Reviewer

***** "Superbly acted and crafted"*
The Reviews Hub

"Fantastically Unique"
North West End



The Story

In 1770 an incredible 'thinking machine' was presented to Empress Maria Theresa of Austria that was to influence and bamboozle the world for over 80 years. A life-sized automaton in the fashionable garb of a 'mysterious Turk' gazed down onto two opposing armies of chessmen. A key was inserted, the mechanism was wound and in a whirring of cogs *The Turk* came to life, raising its head and making its move. *The Turk* appeared an impressive machine but behind the cogs was it all that it seemed?

During its facinating lifetime, *The Turk* toured all over the world. Firstly, this was with its reluctant creator and court engineer, *Wolfgang Von Kempelen.* Later, things really started to happen with its second owner, the notorious mechanician and showman, *Johann Nepomuk Maelzel...*

The Show

1838. A cabin aboard 'The Otis'. Night...
Surrounded by well-travelled packing crates and empty wine bottles, a drunken and dying *Johann Nepomuk Maelzel* revisits scenes from his life, losses and adventures with the amazing, chess playing automaton known as, *The Turk*.

Fuelled with alcohol and yellow fevered madness, *Maelzel* and *The Turk* explore the sacrifice of the showman, the promise of the engineer and the passion of the dreamer against a philosophical backdrop of life, love, cognition and existence. With historical opponents from Napoleon to Beethoven, Barnum to Babbage, Benjamin Franklin to Edgar Allan Poe, *The Turk's* enigmatic legacy of technology and chess paved the way for the future of computing, automation, artificial intelligence and even magic.

A dark, tragi-comedy with music and song...

Contains some strong language.

HARROGATE THEATRE

LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

"For what is worth the power of God in a mechanical soul..."

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