

The Ghastly Dreadfuls – Atlanta, Georgia – 10.25.2009

by [admin](#) on Oct. 26, 2009, under [Good Music](#), [Video](#)

Around Halloween, my girlfriend, myself and another couple traditionally venture down to the [Netherworld Haunted House](#) in Atlanta, Georgia. It is perhaps the largest, most professional and damn scariest haunted house in America, and well worth the visit. This year, however, we decided to cram in a few other festivities for the weekend. On Sunday, this included a visit to [The Center for Puppetry Arts](#) to see a performance by The Ghastly Dreadfuls. The official title this year is actually, *The Ghastly Dreadfuls II: Handbook of Practical Hauntings and Other Phantasmagoria*.



When the idea to check this show out was presented to me, I apathetically agreed to doing so but left it at that. A puppet show...okay. Sounds good. Whatever. I soon learned that the Ghastly Dreadfuls are far more than a [puppet show](#), and far more entertaining than I had initially imagined. The Ghastly Dreadfuls, themselves, are a group of seven vastly talented musicians, actors and puppeteers. Their show combines all three of these art forms into a very slick, very engaging performance.

On the music front, they move around their [instruments](#) with a skillful ease. No one seemed to miss a beat. Using keys as the backbone, they dealt out a number of macabre originals, as well as more popular songs, both classical and contemporary. Everyone shared in the singing duties, though their soprano, Reay Kaplan (as Lady Dreadful) stole the show numerous times. Also of particular note is their absolutely affecting string section, comprised of Scott Depoy (as Dizzily Dreadful) on [violin](#) and Kristen Jarvis (as Daftly Dreadful) on [cello](#). These two elements added immensely to the dynamics of the sound. Said sound, itself, resonated around the room with crystal clear acoustics. Sound designers, Elisheba Ittoop and Mimi Epstein, were wholly on top of their game in this regards.

As for the acting and puppetry aspects, they basically depicted several spooky stories from around the world, including some originals. These stories were largely predictable, mainly because most people have heard similar versions of them already at one time or another. This was no matter, though, for the execution was fantastic. There was a large variety of puppet mediums used, from [hand puppets](#) to [marionettes](#) to large cardboard cartoons. Sometimes the puppets and the people interacted with each other as part of the storyline. Whatever the case, there was no lack of emotional gravity. Mostly, it was humorous, but they also delved into some disturbingly sad material (*The Deep End of the Pool*) and also displayed moments that were downright touching (11:59).

The whole thing culminates into a finale ("All Hallows' Eve") that manages to be eerie and uplifting at once. As strange new lights appear, the performers console us: "Open up your eyes / Take a look around / No one ever dies / What is lost is found." The effect is stirring and a perfect close to the show.

The Ghastly Dreadfuls' performances are running until November 1st at the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta. If you are anywhere near the southeastern United States, this is completely worth your time and money. It should be noted, however, that the material is not exactly for children.

Co-writer, Jason von Hinezmeyer, put together this sampling of last year's show. It's out of focus and certainly doesn't convey the quality of the actual show, but it might give you an idea of what you are missing...

