

One-man theatre brought Scrooge's dead pal to life

by John Nurden

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It's not often an actor can mesmerise an entire audience on his own. But James Hyland has the gift.

His incredible one-man performance of *A Christmas Carol – As Told By Jacob Marley (Deceased)* stunned an audience at the Sheppey Little Theatre into silence as the deathly-white ghost of Ebenezer Scrooge's long-dead business partner dragged itself on the stage while manacled to clanking chains and ankle irons.

This was heart-in-the-mouth theatre in its finest form as he delivered line after faultless line of perfect prose brought to life with exquisite detail and the cleverest of subtle mime.

Marley's spirit has been banished to roam the world, retelling Charles Dickens's classic Christmas tale. He certainly

looked half-dead, with the 50 shades of grey make-up giving his eyes and mouth a Satanic, Devil-red appearance.

With just an old wooden chair on stage – bought for £15 – he swung from Marley to Scrooge, doubling up as the clerk Bob Cratchit, the Gollum-like Spirit of Christmas Past, the booming-voiced Christmas Present and the sinister Spirit of Christmas Yet To Come.

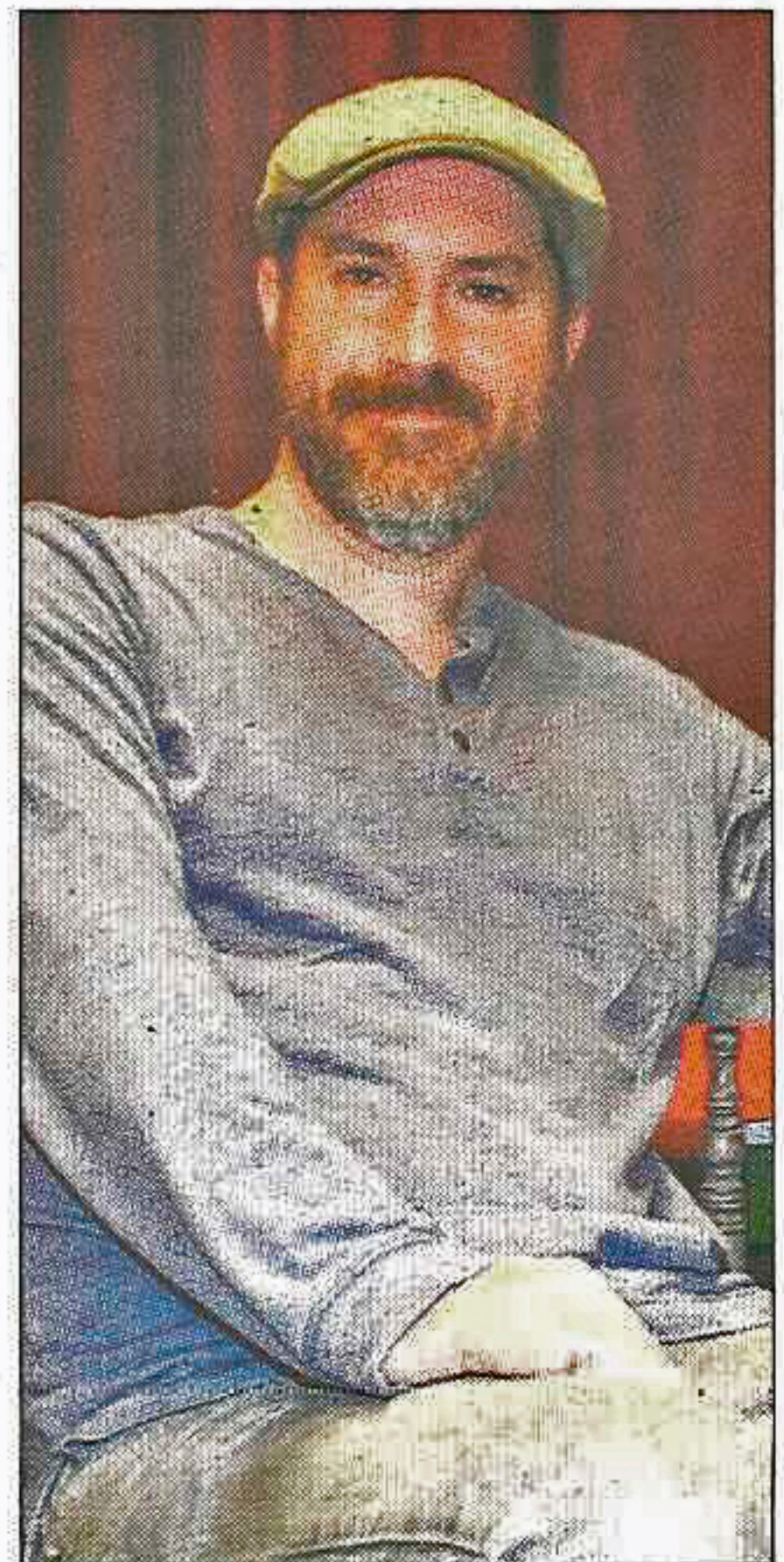
All the while, wind howled around the Sheerness theatre, adding to the spooky atmosphere.

No wonder he was given such rapturous applause at the end.

If organisers can book him again – he does a nicely dark version of *Jekyll and Hyde* and his own interpretation of Fagin's last hour from *Oliver Twist* – you should snap up the tickets immediately.

Tell them Marley's Ghost sent you...

■ For more entertainment news, see Nurden's Night Out on page 23



Actor James Hyland stunned the audience at Sheppey Little Theatre