

# The Invisible Man



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By Lisa Jo Sagolla

Doug Varone has achieved something truly original with his choreography and staging of *The Invisible Man*, presented at Baruch Performing Arts Center. Created by Anthony Cochrane, Peter Meineck, Robert Richmond, and Varone, the production (based on the famous H.G. Wells novel) tells its disturbing story almost completely through movement, with the assistance of just a few spoken words.

It is necessary to coin a term to describe the amazingly expressive new movement hybrid Varone has created for this show. How about "choreographic staging"? Varone takes the simple physical "business" that actors would normally do and lets it naturally evolve into dancing and then back again into pedestrian moves and gestures.

An ensemble of hospital workers walk to and fro, efficiently performing the actions of their jobs in patterns and with energies that grow increasingly more stylized, graceful, and harmoniously designed. But just when we feel a dance coming on, the performers' movements return to a more realistic realm. When the Invisible Man attacks a doctor, the fighting action is straightforwardly presented, but it culminates with a breathtaking belly slide through a door frame that -- for just a moment -- is pure dance.

Despite the beauty of the show's movement design, the dramatic tone of the work is decidedly scary. The performers -- most of whom are members of Varone's dance company -- are all marvelous actors and create a foreboding atmosphere through the muscular tensions in their bodies. The mask worn by the Invisible Man is terrifying and the shrewd use of the rolling set pieces (designed by Meineck and Richmond) produces sudden, shocking surprises. The scariest element in this wonderfully cohesive work, however, is the delectably spine-tingling score composed by Cochrane.

A psychological thriller -- don't bring the kids! -- *The Invisible Man* is good, old-fashioned theatrical expressionism in a stylishly contemporary incarnation.