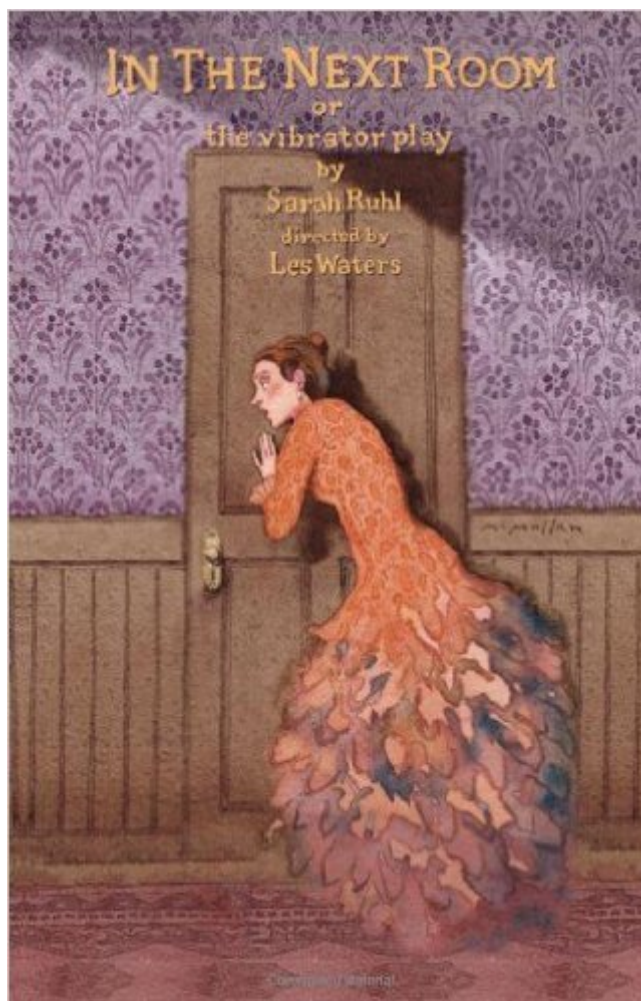


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In The Next Room (or The Vibrator Play)



Synopsis

“A fascinating, funny and evocative play. . . . Ruhl develops the story with the enticing blend of irreverent humor and skewed realism. . . . It’s beautiful.” —“San Francisco Chronicle” [This] breathtakingly inventive addition to Ruhl’s singular body of work . . . has the potential to be a modern masterpiece.” —“Los Angeles Times” Sarah Ruhl made her Broadway debut this fall with her latest effervescent comedy: a play about sex, intimacy, and equality, set in the 1880s, when enthusiasm for the electric light bulb gave rise to a handy new instrument to treat female hysteria. The story revolves around the medical office and home of Dr. Givings, who regularly induces “paroxysm” in his once high-strung patient Sabrina, allowing her to happily return to playing piano. Soon, Sabrina falls in love with the doctor’s assistant Annie, and also befriends his wife Catherine, who is dealing with her own neurotic misgivings about not being able to breast-feed her baby. With this new work, Ruhl once again uses playful symbolism and lyrical language as she makes seemingly effortless thematic leaps—crafting a play with tremendous critical and audience appeal, in her singular theatrical voice. Sarah Ruhl’s plays include *Dead Man’s Cell Phone*, *The Clean House* (a Pulitzer Prize finalist), *Passion Play*, and *Eurydice*, all of which have been widely produced throughout the United States and internationally. She is a recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Now that I have read this book, (Kindle edition) and seen the play, I am ready render my thoughts. In

short from: this is a much better play to watch than it is to read. Nowhere in the text is the pointed wit of an Oscar Wilde or the deep sophistication of a Tom Stoppard. The words are simple and as a read it is somewhat limp. As a performance, these problem disappear. Sarah Ruhl's play takes place in two rooms, sometimes simultaneously. Mostly we are in the front room of the home/office of Dr. and Mrs Givings. The "Next Room" is his medical office. Dr. Giving's practice may include a variety of mostly female medicine as practiced in America, in the 1880's but here we only see him providing one service. He treats mostly women, and on rare occasion men for hysteria. Note that the word hysteria is from a Greek root meaning uterus. At this time a new machine, called the vibrator had been introduced for the purpose of treating female hysteria by inducing a paroxysm. There was, in America, at that time no medical notion of a female orgasm. And so Dr. Givings uses vibrators on women, and one man to relive their medical symptoms. He seems to have the notion that this treatment, improperly applied is onanism (masturbation also a huge evil at this time) however he never connects his treatment with anything sexual. Over time Mrs. Givings tries to understand what is happening in The Next Room and to come to terms with her need for romance and sex. There is humor here in the form of the women, not realizing just what they are experiencing. There is humor in the "vibrator play" that take place in "the other room".

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