

## Overview

*Sherlock VR: A Scandal in Bohemia* is a single-player sandbox VR adventure game featuring branching narrative: it is part first-person brawler part choose your own adventure story. Play one of three iconic characters for hours of gameplay action.

## Story Brief

Victoria's London is filled to the brim with humanity; bandits and heroes and gossips and socialites all rubbing up against one another are bound to create chaos in the streets. Luckily, London is home to the world's greatest detective, Sherlock Holmes, but in this adventure don't just follow the clues - be the detective - do your own dirty work, be a *crime fighter* because now you can in untethered VR.

Embody the most famous detective ever created, or play the loyal, dependable Dr. Watson in the caper that introduced *The Woman*, or better yet, play the lady herself, Irene Adler. A looping narrative structure keeps players following a basic narrative path while still allowing choices with real consequences. We utilize intuitive gestures to trigger choice mechanics, allowing the player to fully embody the character without the pressure of role-playing.

Each narrative level introduces new game mechanics requiring players to master new skills and improve upon others to reach the tales' conclusion successfully. A variety of gameplay modes within each level flow naturally to create a fully realized extra reality.

## Targeted Platforms

Oculus Quest and HTC Pro Eye are the targeted hardware because they allow for an untethered playing experience and natural locomotion. Dynamic architecture is used for the untethered platforms to take full advantage of free roam capabilities. This title will also support tethered VR systems, Rift S, HTC Vive and Vive Cosmos using conventional VR locomotion mechanics.

This game breaks action and story elements into scenes making it flexible and fun for both in-home play and the LEB market.

## Core Gameplay Modes

Multiple gameplay modes flow seamlessly from one to another simulating a complicated reality supporting each of the three playable characters in their narrative adventure by allowing them to interact in an as natural manner as possible.

- Free Roam

All characters have complete freedom to roam within a singular interior space, their place of residence. These environments are completely interactive and destructible serving as great locations for players to practice new skills.

- Guided Paths

These are semi-free roam paths laid out within the level and are presented as two different directional paths from which to choose. The city streets are where players meet NPCs ready to find fault with the character's attitude, walk or general demeanor. Players must use their fighting skills to defend themselves or explore locomotion mechanics in an effort to survive all the interactive elements within the city grid.

This gameplay mode is additionally useful when a character does not have a direct narrative goal or time-sensitive plot point to achieve. The opportunity to explore the city map may lead to new observations, skills learned, or special objects gained.

- Scripted Scenes with Decision Trees

Scripted scenes deliver the majority of narrative information provided to the players by NPCs. These scenes are confined to interior spaces, have some interactivity or roleplay trial involved, and have hard limits as to what objects can be played within these scenes.

As functions of story delivery these are key points in the decision matrix for each character; the gesture mechanic to indicate a Yes/No choice has a big impact on the player's path through the story, and how it ultimately unfolds. Some choices can be circled back upon within the narrative, an example is: Watson deciding not to leave his house on Night One and treat the patient at Briony Lodge. Some choices lead to failure, an example is: choosing to fight the King's Thugs during the chase to Saint Nina's Church.

- Failure: Point of No Return (PoNR)

When the player has made a choice that will not lead back to a narrative loop a Failure state or Point of No Return is triggered. If the PoNR is a fight initiated by the player towards an NPC the skill level will continue to rise, or targets continue to spawn until the player has been defeated. The PoNR will blink the player back into their Dressing Room.

The Dressing Room environment after a PoNR will have more hints, visual and auditory, or direct information on how to proceed through the gameplay more successfully. Examples include the use of pictures and props that point directly to the narrative correct choice. Players will only replay the narrative day they were currently playing when the failure state was triggered.

- Time Trials

Adding a time component to increase the stakes for players varies the gameplay pace throughout the narrative. Countdown as a constraining factor of gameplay will be commonly used in this game, as it is a natural reflection of our world, and takes many forms in this title: racing/chasing contests, mini-games, object search/ransack, and roleplay/rhythm tests.

## Story and Gameplay in Detail

### Green Room & Dressing Rooms

The player will start the experience in a furnished theater Green Room presented with three labeled dressing room doors to choose from: Sherlock Holmes, Dr. John Watson, and Irene Adler.

Once a player has chosen a door they enter ...

A Dressing Room uniquely designed for that specific character. This room is personal and informative about the character that lives there; it is also a training space and should deploy as much information to the player about the game without being a tutorial as possible. All in-game direction techniques are introduced here at the beginning of each new level or story act, an example is: the introduction of the nod mechanic is the

first element in the first Dressing Room for the user because it is the primary narrative choice mechanic for the players.

As each character progresses the dressing room will change: there are pictures - which give hints of skills, information about their relationships with other NPCs, and there are objects - fighting weapons and costumes to choose from. Each room is equipped with a Mirror for players to see themselves as the characters. Players can choose a costume and apply it to themselves. When looking directly at their body in-game only gloved hands and shod feet will appear, but when standing at the mirror they see themselves as the character, fully embodied.

The Dressing Room also functions as a pause in the narrative action. When a player wants to spend more time training or take some time for reflection they can push down on the Joystick and choose to Exit to the Dressing Room.

The Choice mechanic for exiting or pausing is the YES nod.

When a character has made a choice that triggers a Point of No Return option the player is returned to their dressing room on the day in which they made their fatal error. Once returned to the dressing room, use visual and auditory clues to give hints for successful narrative choices. An example, If Watson chooses to chase the King's Thugs through the streets of London on foot then provide a photograph of Watson riding a safety bicycle.

The Green Room is also the exit point from the game, where players can view their entire progress before removing equipment. When a player is ready to save their progress they press down on the Joystick and can choose to Exit to the Green Room and emerge from the experience.

### Non Player Characters:

The Dressing Room is where Non-Player Characters are introduced. Each of the characters has at least one NPC that lives in the home environment with them and helps facilitate the narrative.

In scripted scenes, NPCs give feedback to heighten the emotional impact on the player and influence their actions. The feedback is meant to create performance buy-in for taking on a character's role. NPCs give directions and make suggestions, this is also meant to serve as narrative guidance. These characters do not conduct tutorials, but are fair stand in dummies for combat training, though, in general, it is not considered polite to attack loved ones or members of the household.

#### Narrative positive NPCs

Sherlock - Mrs. Hudson, Dr. Watson

Watson - Mrs. Watson, Maid Janie, and Sherlock

Irene - Her Ladies Maid and Godfrey Norton

#### Other NPCs, either narratively neutral or bad include:

The King of Bohemia and his two Royal Thugs,

An Anglican Minister

George the Coachman and some street Cabbies

An assortment of street characters in Briony Lodge, St. Nina's square, and the streets of London.

## Story

This story has three main characters and as such there are three game scripts - one for each playable character. The story description that follows gives a flow of the story with scenes being described from the Point of View of one character: the other two characters being described as secondary to the action or as fellow NPCs. Only major choice points for each main character are provided in this story description.

Act One opens in *The Criterion Theater* for a night of light opera. Irene Adler stars in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Princess Loanth* to a packed house; in attendance are Sherlock Holmes, the King of Bohemia, his retinue inclusive of his personal bodyguards or Thugs, most of London's upper class, and Godfrey Norton, Queen's Counsel, and acknowledged lover of Irene.

The stage lights are lit and the curtain rises on Irene; she delights the crowd with her lively performance until the King of Bohemia makes a threatening move. Irene has a choice: ***risk being captured by a ruthless monarch or make a speedy, possibly reckless escape by creating a diversion?***

***If an escape*** she leaves the theater alight making an exit out the back of the theater into a deserted alley, but her relief is short-lived as the King's Thugs find her. Sherlock also might also enter the, not so, deserted alley. ***Does she fight or does she run?***

***If a brawl*** breaks out in the alley behind the theater Irene will win, as she is a capable and scrappy opponent. She then disappears into the streets of London leaving the Thugs unconscious and Sherlock bemused. Briony Lodge is her home and she arrives dirty and limping. Her lady's maid takes charge and sends for a doctor.

***If she runs*** home to avoid confrontation she will find that the King's Thugs have arrived there first. The Thugs have pushed their way into her entrance hall, injuring her lady's maid. Irene fights the burly bodyguards and wins. Now she must send for a doctor to care for her domestic.

Elsewhere in the city, the Watsons are enjoying an evening by the fire in their *home*. John and Mary are in repose; she is reading aloud from something, maybe the newspaper. A knock at the door reveals a messenger requesting the doctor to make a house call in an adjoining neighborhood. ***Does he stay or does he go?***

**If he stays** it is destined not to be the quiet evening it promised. First, the late edition of the paper arrives with the headline that the Criterion is in flames.

“It’s a good thing that we stayed in tonight, John, the theater house has burned down.”

“I know you enjoy the absolute latest in entertainment, Mary, but is the use of popular vernacular in our drawing room really necessary?”

She purses her lips. “The Criterion is on fire.”

Shortly after, Sherlock bursts into the room and demands Watson’s assistance in a most grievous matter. Both Sherlock and Mary participate in persuading John to attend Sherlock back to Baker Street.

**If he goes** Janie enters the drawing-room carrying Watson’s shoes freshly shined.

“Oh, Janie, you’ve scored the leather,” says the doctor.

She curtsies in a bored sort of way, “sorry, sir.”

“It’s the second pair...Mary!?”

Mary gives some sort of reprimand to the maid as Watson picks up his bag and exits. Watson makes his way into a tonish area of London, near the Serpentine, to a residence called Briony Lodge. A lady has been injured but has declined his direct services. He gives specific instructions to her maid as to how best care for a slightly sprained ankle and then departs. Watson’s stroll home takes him past Baker Street.

**Does he continue home or visit Sherlock?**

*Interior of 221 B Baker Street.* Sherlock arrives home from the theater to find three objects waiting in the lounge the evening post with the headline of the theater on fire, a very fine letter, and a package. All items are of significance.

Within moments he has a visitor. Sherlock is at the fireplace with his back to the door when Watson arrives.

“Wedlock suits you, I think, Watson. You have put on seven and a half pounds since I last saw you.”

“How on earth did you know it was me?”

“I heard the progress up the stair and deduced it,” replies Sherlock still engrossed by the fire. Watson enters fully into the apartment and makes himself at home.

“Since you are interested in these little problems, you may be interested in my correspondence on the table.”

Watson reads the letter and the two make a mental game out of trying to discern facts out of the cryptic correspondence.

The King of Bohemia arrives in the apartment. He outlines a case of youthful folly in love-on his part, an undeserving young lady, and a gift given of diplomatic significance that will not be returned.

“My negotiations with the lady have been...unsuccessful to date. You must understand: my engagement is to be made public in two days’ time and I must, therefore, have the royal object by that time.”

“You will have to pay.”

“I expect it to be so,” the King replies.

“What steps have been taken thus far to recover the item?”

***Does Sherlock take the case or not?***

***If yes*** then proceed with narrative as written by the author; Holmes is left with a bag of coins and a direction to contact the King at the Savoy Hotel.

“The lady’s address is Briony Lodge, Serpentine.”

After his exit Watson replies, “Why, I know this address. A woman was attacked and I visited there just this evening. I fear the King is not a man to be trusted”

“Then it is even more imperative that I have your consistent moral compass to guide me, Watson.”

***If no then.***

“I had hoped that my station if not my gold would be sufficient to secure your services. ‘Tis no matter, I can proceed without your assistance, Mr. Holmes, but be aware that the repercussions of your choice tonight will have long-reaching consequences. Your reputation will be as nothing.”

“Perhaps, but it will be as nothing as to yours, excellency. I wish you a good evening.”

“I can be found at the Savoy Hotel, Mr. Holmes if you have a change of heart.”

After the King’s dramatic exit Sherlock implores, “Watson, we must be prepared to act for I begin to fear for Mademoiselle’s safety. The King has demonstrated that he does not act with honor. Can I count on your assistance once more my dear friend?”

Watson will try and convince him to take the case, “there is good money in this Holmes and you cannot live on goodwill and ideas alone.”

Act Two opens on a beautiful morning. Sherlock in disguise enters *Watson’s residence* demanding to speak to the doctor. This is the first instance of a movement trail for Sherlock. He has to try and elude the maid, Janie, who protects the Watson’s from the unsavory characters of London.



**If successful** Sherlock bursts in on Watson's breakfast.

**If unsuccessful** Watson enters the hallway and intervenes.

In private consultation. Sherlock is raving and it takes a few moments for Watson to realize this is his calculating friend from the night before.

"The lady is in grave danger, I fear. You must surveil the King and especially his men. I know for a certainty they have not removed from the Savoy. If you go forth right now you will be able to track their movements and report back to me, my good fellow."

Watson arrives at the *Savoy Hotel lobby*: it is filled to the brim with clients, staff, and even a shoe shiner. He must explore the space and find the King and his Thugs but not be seen; his objective is to shadow the men doing the dirty work.

If successful he follows the King's Thugs out into the streets of London.

Meanwhile, at *Briony Lodge*. Irene is enjoying a quiet morning spent in recovery when her lover, Godfrey Norton proceeds into the lounge holding the morning paper and suppressed anger.

"You are the most reckless individual I have ever met."

"I appreciate your concern and attention, Godfrey, I do, but--"

"The theater burned to the ground! I must warn you that this will not stop. Unless

"It was a drastic measure to be sure."

"Marry me, Irene. I've been offered a place with her majesty's diplomatic service in the Americas and must leave tonight on a steamer."

***Will she marry Norton? Yes or No?***

***If yes*** then

"We have but a short time, as I have a special license, and must make haste to the Church of St. Nina's. I will leave directly. You must follow in a few moments my darling."

He exits. She grabs some flowers out of a vase and hurries out the front door. Her phaeton is waiting along with George her groom. She takes off.

Sherlock has been lurking about in the street and abandons his assumed demeanor to pursue both Godfrey and Irene.

***If no*** then Norton exits in a flurry of ill humor. Irene tries to compose herself and convince her servant that they have weathered many storms much worse than this and all will be well in the end. The servant, Annie, is prized by her mistress for her frankness and continues to advocate for some sort of sanctuary.

The King's Thugs break down the back door to the residence and a fight ensues. Irene escapes through the front door and jumps into her phaeton taking flight into the streets of London.

Sherlock witnesses, from the street, the ruckus within and without Briony Lodge: he abandons his assumed demeanor and follows Irene.

A Chase through the *streets of London*. Depending on the character chosen, the user's narrative choices, and personal skill this race has many outcomes. The basic structure is: Godfrey Norton acts as the rabbit; he on a horse. Irene follows in her phaeton: either driving herself or being driven by her coachman, George. Sherlock follows in a commandeered gig. The Thugs follow in a stolen cart and Watson on a safety bicycle. The ending destination, The Church of Saint Nina, is a fixed point regardless of narrative choices.

*The Church of Saint Nina* is a lovely serene church with a single minister in a tense conversation with Norton as Sherlock enters quietly in the back, hiding.

"This is most irregular, sir."

"I understand but as you see this license has been signed by Her Majesty's Foreign Minister."

"I see the signatures and need to converse with my superior."

"You must see the urgency in this matter."

"And yet there is no bride and it is nearing the noon bell."

The minister excuses himself.

Irene enters. She acknowledges that she has been followed to the church but unsure by whom.

"We must act with urgency," says Norton looking around the church with anxiety. He spies Sherlock. Sherlock's choice of costume in the morning dictates his participation in the following ceremony.

***If dressed as a Clergyman*** than Sherlock is compelled forward to the altar and muddles through the wedding ceremony. Watson arrives midway through and is roped in as a witness to the ceremony. Sherlock signs the wedding license and enters their names in the Parrish registry.

***If dressed as a Vagabond*** than Norton takes him by the arm and compels him to be the witness to the marriage ceremony officiated by the reluctant minister.

The Thugs enter the chapel as Irene and Norton push past to the street with the accompaniment of the noon bells. The NPCs on the street have gathered to watch all the activity. Sherlock exits as himself to watch what happens next. Irene throws her bouquet: she and Norton leave separately on their respective conveniences. The Thugs abandon the stolen cart and leave on foot.

Sherlock and Watson are left to discuss what has transpired that morning and deliberate what to do next. ***Does Sherlock continue in the King's employment? Yes or No?***

Act Three. The many choices of the main characters converge in the evening conclusion of this narrative. What is universal, regardless of character choice, is that Briony Lodge comes under a coordinated assault designed to encourage Irene to give up the gift from the King of Bohemia.

All three characters have training exercises in their dressing rooms between Acts 2 and 3 preparing them for: time trials, ransacking, the building and interpreting of messages with found objects.

The assault on *Irene's home* begins with Sherlock and Watson staging an accident in the street just beyond her garden. They demand entrance into her lounge with Sherlock in a disguise and Watson in his doctor's capacity. Watson gives Annie a number for an ambulance which is a cover for hired confederates.

***If Sherlock and Watson are in the employ of the King*** then Watson will put Sherlock in the care of Irene and go outside in pretext to get the ambulance, he will then break a window and throw in a smoke bomb. It is Sherlock's job to watch closely what Irene does next. Once the smoke device has been removed, Watson will load Sherlock into a carriage and they evacuate the scene. They communicate with the King and then return to Briony Lodge to find the King's gift.

Irene and her maid have vacated the property. Sherlock and Watson must ransack the lounge to find a package addressed to the King.

The King laughs once he opens the package.

"We are all outwitted. She deserves the spoils of her conquest; my jewels and your cleverness. She is leaving tonight for America"

Watson and Sherlock on the path towards home stroll past a dock on the Thames. Someone calls out to the pair from a large barge and throws a package to Sherlock. Inside is a wedding photo of Irene and Norton and a note saying she was glad he had participated in her case. Depending on the narrative choices of Sherlock included may be a copy of the marriage certificate, a picture of him at the burning of the Criterion, and an article from a foreign paper describing the partnership between the two men.

***If Sherlock and Watson are against the King*** than once inside Briony Lodge they describe how she is in danger from the King and his henchmen. They must be prepared to defend the residence.

“Madam, you are not safe here. I encourage you to call in the assistance of the police force,” advises Watson.

Once the King’s forces have arrived projectiles are thrown in the windows of her home triggering time trials. The player must recover the projectiles and return to the targets outside in the street. The Thugs enter the home and a brawl breaks out. Once the Thugs have been defeated it is discovered that Irene and her maid have vanished. Watson and Sherlock ransack the lounge for clues and find a package from Irene. Inside is a bag of money, a letter of thanks, and a wedding photograph.

## Gameplay in Detail

### Gameplay Mechanics

This title is leveraging motion mechanics originally developed in house to combat extreme motion sickness, but proven and used by players because they are fun alongside standard VR game mechanics. Examples are the Yes/No Choice, Ski Jump/Flip, and Horseback Riding.

A general guideline across all game mechanics regarding handheld objects: once an object has been selected with the trigger button the object stays in hand until the player releases it with the trigger. Objects can be transferred between hands with the trigger.

## Yes/No Choice

Nodding of the head is an intuitive gesture to a Yes/No question. A head nod moves the story forward by triggering scripted dialogue, allowing the player to embody the character in the scene, it is as simple as that. The player makes key observations about what happens as a result of their choice and deduces the motivations of others in the narrative without being removed from it by a screen with text or a cut scene with shifting cinematic animations. This gesture is the primary choice mechanic in the experience.

## Ski Jump/Backflip

The ski jump mechanic was developed as an alternative to teleportation. First, target your desired location, targeting is not based on head position but on hand position, then hold both hands in parallel, in the desired direction, and pull down. The speed of the motion determines how far the player will move. To perform a backflip do the reverse motion. Use to jump over obstacles, scale buildings, or defeat adversaries.

A unique feature of this mechanic is the decoupling of position from head tracking making it possible to move in a direction that you are not looking in.

## Time Trials

There are multiple uses of Time Trials within each story act ranging in scope from mini games on the side streets to carriage chases through the city grid during lunch hour.

### Lightning Ransack games

Players must locate a specific item in a completely playable, destructible space, then complete a goal with it; all within a very short time frame of 30-45 seconds. These trials are repeated until the player has achieved the goal with achievement recognition given for quick mastery. An example of a lightning ransack game is: Finding a smoke bomb lobbed through a window in the defense of Briony Lodge, Act Three.

### Skills Time Trials

Task-oriented mini-games are found sprinkled within the city grid. If a character succeeds in learning the skill, like stacking bottles into pyramids, or a game of chance, like cups, they can earn items that may possibly be useful in the narrative to come.

## Roleplay/Rhythm Trials

These timed games require the player to hit visual marks in a specific order and to a specific rhythm; they can be tied to music, or just be a sequence of motions that trigger dialogue. As the player makes more energetic movements the NPC's give positive feedback encouraging the player to achieve/succeed. One of the first mini-games in the experience is Irene's Rhythm Trial on the stage where the player must follow the directions to perform in an operetta.

## Race/Chase Contests

The following mechanics are primarily utilized in the chase levels. They will work in concert with visual signage and timed goals.

### Horse Riding

Once the player has grabbed the reins the avatar will hold them without continued button pressure. The player then uses the hand controllers in an up and down motion to change the speed of the horse. Moving the hands from side to side controls the direction of the horse's head allowing the player to chart a course through the level.

### Arm Running and Walking

The player simply moves their arms like they are pumping when running or speed walking. The speed is variable according to the players intensity of motion.

### Riding a Bicycle

Like arm running, this mechanic uses the motion of the arms to control the avatar's feet allowing the player to ride the pedals with their hands. This is an off set mechanic mimicking the structure of the pedals.

## Hand Writing

The player picks up a writing implement with the trigger, squeezes the grip button, and a squiggle appears creating a signature. Sign your character's name to make a binding legal contract. For a more controlled hand continue to hold down the grip and wield the

writing implement. With practice, a player can: tag items or places, and leave notes and messages for other players to find.

Practically how this works is, every time the grip is released the game controller application takes an image grab in the headset and these images can be saved to the player's profile. Once an image has been captured ask the player if they want to share/keep the object; this is a Yes/No choice triggered by the head nod.

### Weapons or Personal Objects

Each character will have a personal object in hand at all times, depending on the scene and costume chosen, that can be deployed as a tool or combat weapon. Personal objects are semi-permanent conditions within the larger gameplay and are absent only in four conditions: a non-natural locomotion choice has been made, when a player is reaching out towards highlighted or playable objects, they are not present during Time Trials of any sort, with the exception of arm running, and inside the Dressing Rooms.

Examples of Personal Objects: Fan, Cane, Hat, Bag, Combs, Medical equipment, Walking sticks, Newspaper, Books.

### UI/UX Design

In addition to basic standards of player communication, Voice-Over narration and written directions will be used. We will provide directional signage and sound, as well as other sensory cues.

### Directional signage

In game path direction like lite colorful arrows showing players the choices in a Guided Path mode. It can also be connected to Time Trials, showing the player pathway choices to take in a chase scene.

### Items of Significance

Objects that have narrative significance or are helpful tools for the player to utilize in gameplay. These items will have a highlighting effect applied and if of extreme significance a slight shake for added attention.

#### Auditory Hints

Directional sound will guide players to the scene of greatest importance, if a player is unattentive and moving away from the scene of action then the atmospheric sound volume is reduced. In a narrative context, the auditory hints can be tied to the Items of Significance - giving items a slight jingling to join in on the visual highlight to indicate importance.

#### Character persuasion

NPCs give positive feedback to the actions of the players. The feedback is meant to create performance buy-in for being a different person in-game and taking on a character's role. NPCs provide directions, not detailed tutorials. If a player has neglected a narrative choice, NPCs will engage the character and endeavor to guide them back to the waiting choice.

#### Cone of Silence

When a narrative choice is crucial and the player is inattentive grey out the rest of the environment focusing sound and color on the choice mechanic. This should be triggered by an internal timer on the choice mechanic, the idea is to gently remind the player of the choice at hand.



# Character Design

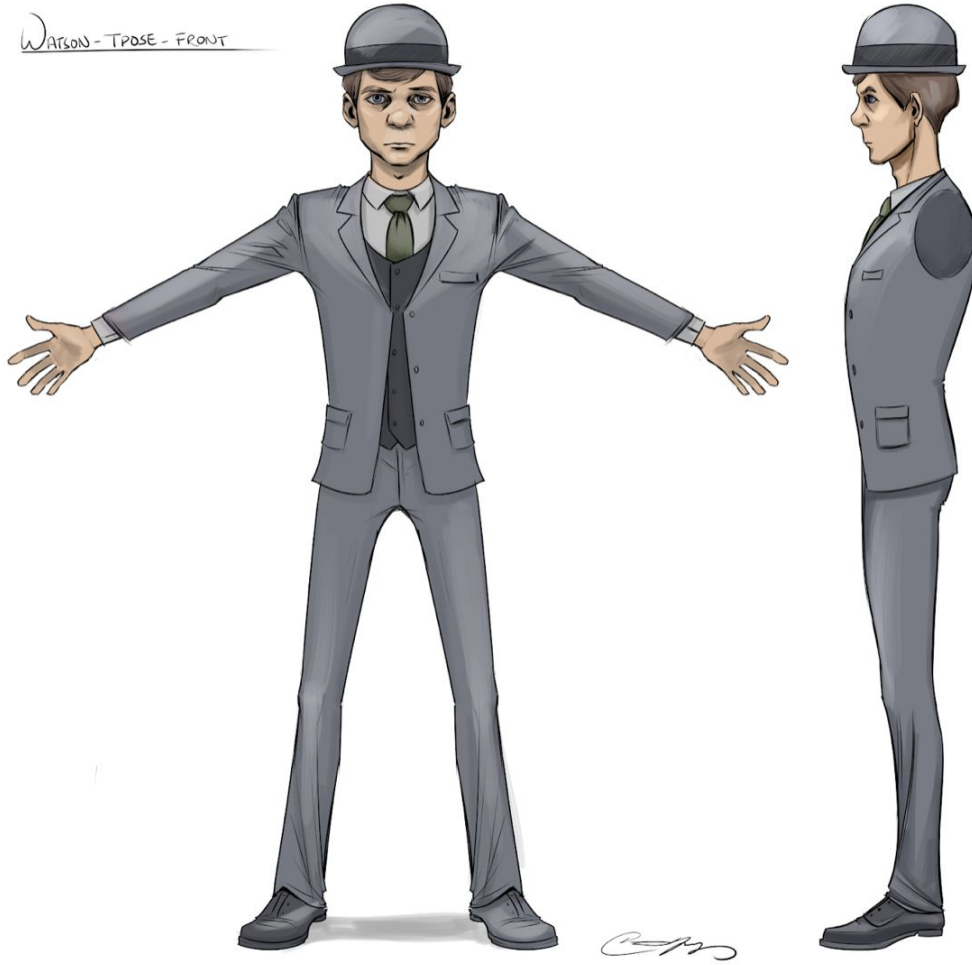
## Sherlock

SHERLOCK - ROUND 2



Dr. John Watson

---

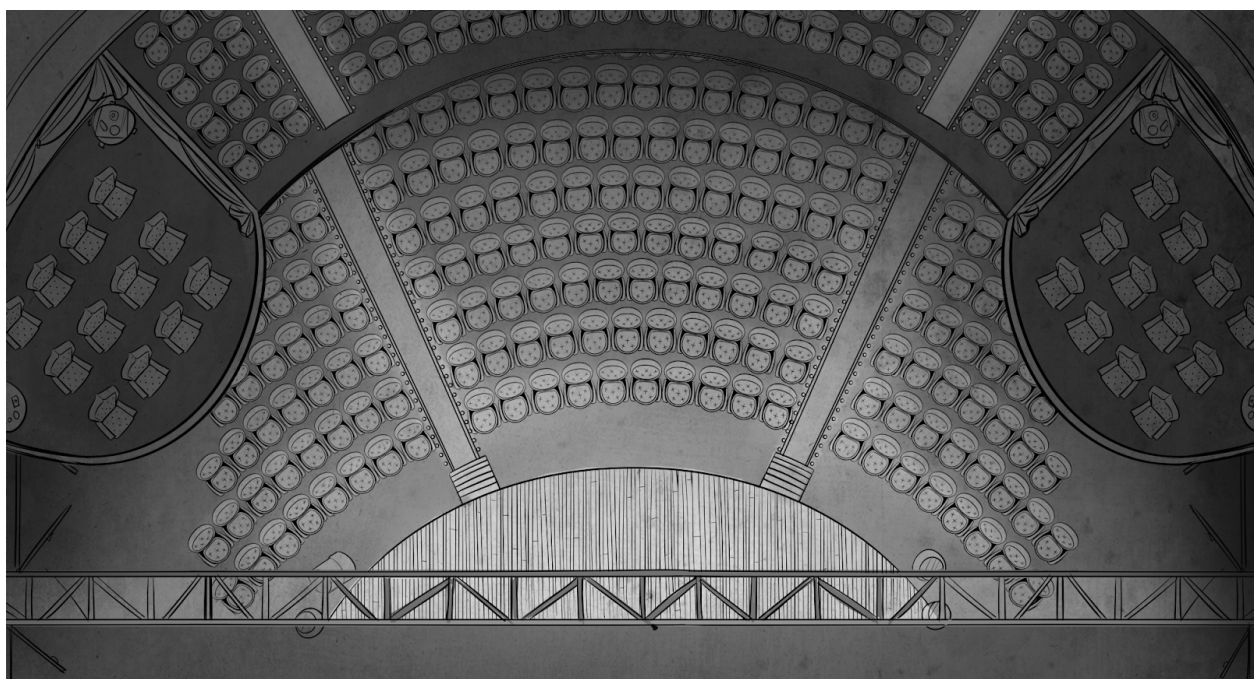
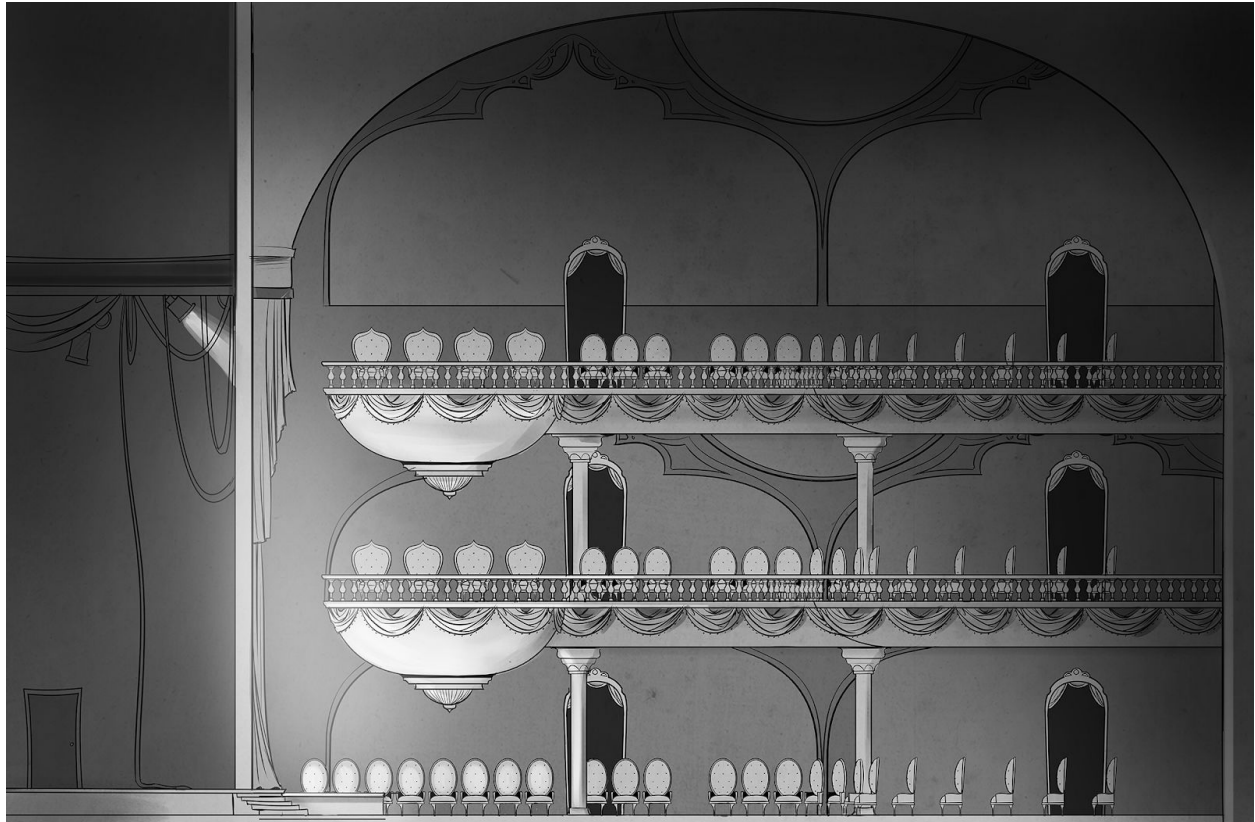


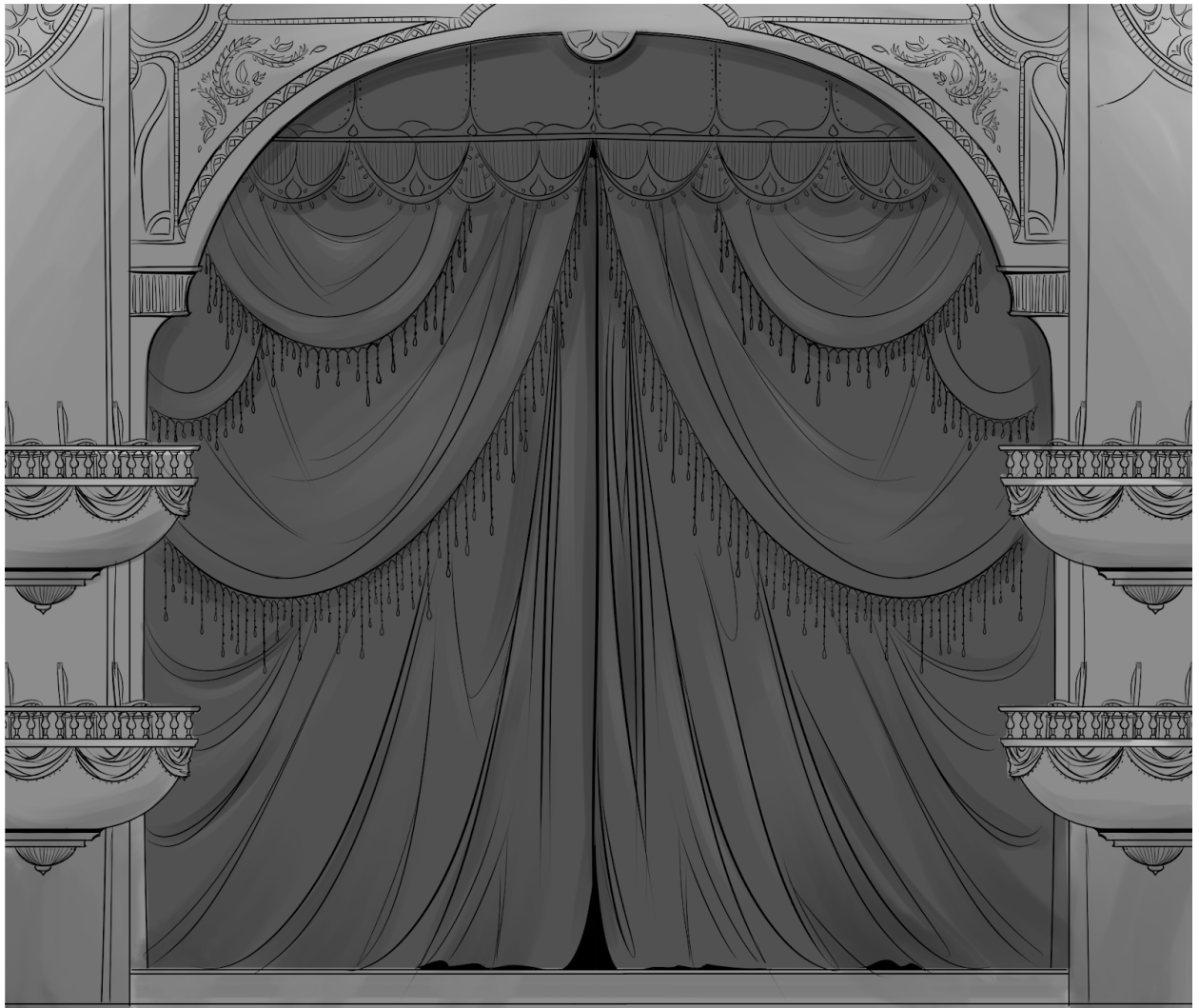
King of Bohemia



# Environmental Design

Criterion Theater

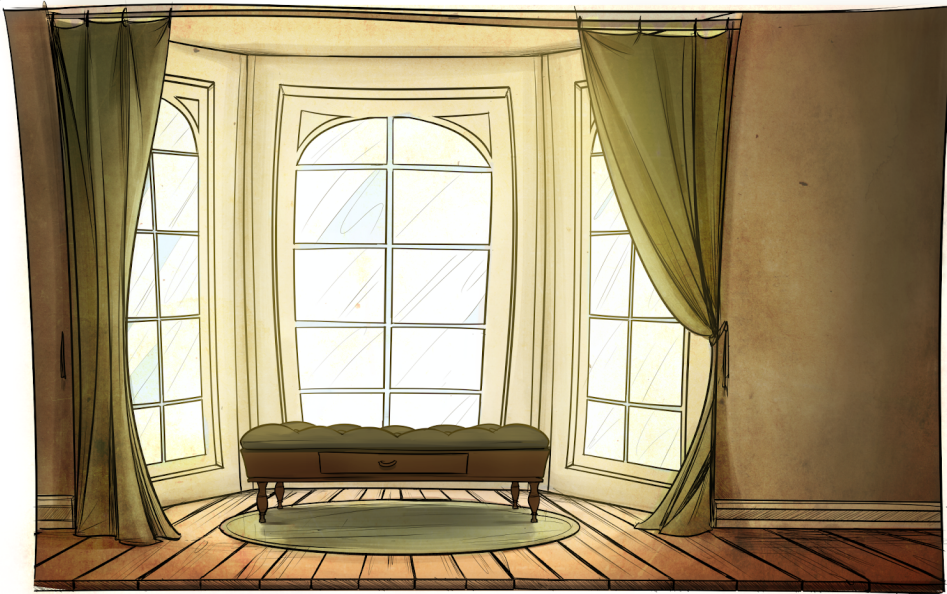






221 B Baker St





## Visual References Design Inspirations

Criterion Theater London

**Address:** 218-223 Piccadilly, St. James's, London W1V 9LB, UK

**Capacity:** 588

**Opened:** March 21, 1874

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criterion\\_Theatre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Criterion_Theatre)

### Piccadilly Circus Map



Example of the green room

<http://infotainmentnews.net/2013/08/24/10-entertaining-hidden-objects-games/>

