

Meeting Notes

March 16, 2024



Reported by Carla Coupe



Early spring was in full flower in Bethesda, Maryland, when approximately 50 Sherlockians gathered at Alfio's La Trattoria for our quarterly meeting. After an hour of socializing, Peter Blau took the lectern and offered his traditional welcome. He explained that all attendees are now members of The Red Circle—the least exclusive Sherlockian society in the world—and, like the Camorra, the organization alluded to in the story on which our name is based, “once you're in, you can't get out.” He also thanked Alan Rettig for updating the nametags.



Attendees then enjoyed Alfio's delicious lunch while conversing with our table-mates. Once coffee and spumoni were finished, Peter introduced Curtis Armstrong (BSI, “An Actor and a Rare One”), our speaker. Curtis has appeared in numerous stage, television and film productions including *Moonlighting*, *Risky Business*, *Revenge of the Nerds*, *Supernatural*, and *Ray*. He has written extensively on Sherlock Holmes, P.G. Wodehouse, and Washington Irving. During the January birthday festivities in New York, Curtis, along with Ashley Polasek and Ken Ludwig, starred in Ray Betzner's comedic masterpiece *Mrs. Hudson and the Return of Sherlock*

Holmes [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWeF6MgQ-YA>]. Matt Hall has graciously made this video available, as well as the one of today's presentation.

Curtis's talk on “The B List” of Sherlockian villains was an expanded version of his presentation at the 2024 BSI annual dinner and was just as delightful. After a quick look at a few of the A List villains, he hilariously explored the “bumbling, cut-rate, we-try-harder” criminal wannabes, such as James Windibank, James Ryder, Count Negretto Sylvius, and the Spencer John gang. These “uninspired, unimaginative, and stupid” baddies were the dregs of the “criminal industrial complex”. They may have made up the majority of Sherlock's cases, but they definitely were “The B List”.

After thunderous applause and an interesting Q&A session, Peter gathered our attention for announcements of upcoming events, which also appear on The Red Circle website. Of particular interest, historian Lucy Worsley's series *Killing Sherlock* is now

available on YouTube, and Amazon Prime is showing Mark Gatiss's adaptation of the Conan Doyle story "Lot 249".

Naturally there were door prizes, masterfully drawn from the hat by Ashley Polasek.

Larry Miller provided a fascinating coda for the meeting, sharing with us his interest in exploring "things to admire" in the Canon. He explained how a tiny detail in a story can lead him down research rabbit holes, and how he searches for artifacts from the relevant period. He showed us Watson's military unit crests, as well as images of the ship on which an injured Watson returned to England. Larry also had "darbies"—handcuffs such as the ones Lestrade would use—demonstrated two period police whistles, and displayed a 19th century cataract knife, such as the one used by Straker in "Silver Blaze".

We hope that Larry will return and share more of his finds with us.

Before closing the meeting, Peter reminded us that our next meeting will take place in June, and to keep an eye on the website for more information.

The Red Circle wishes everyone a beautiful spring!

--Photos by Matt Hall