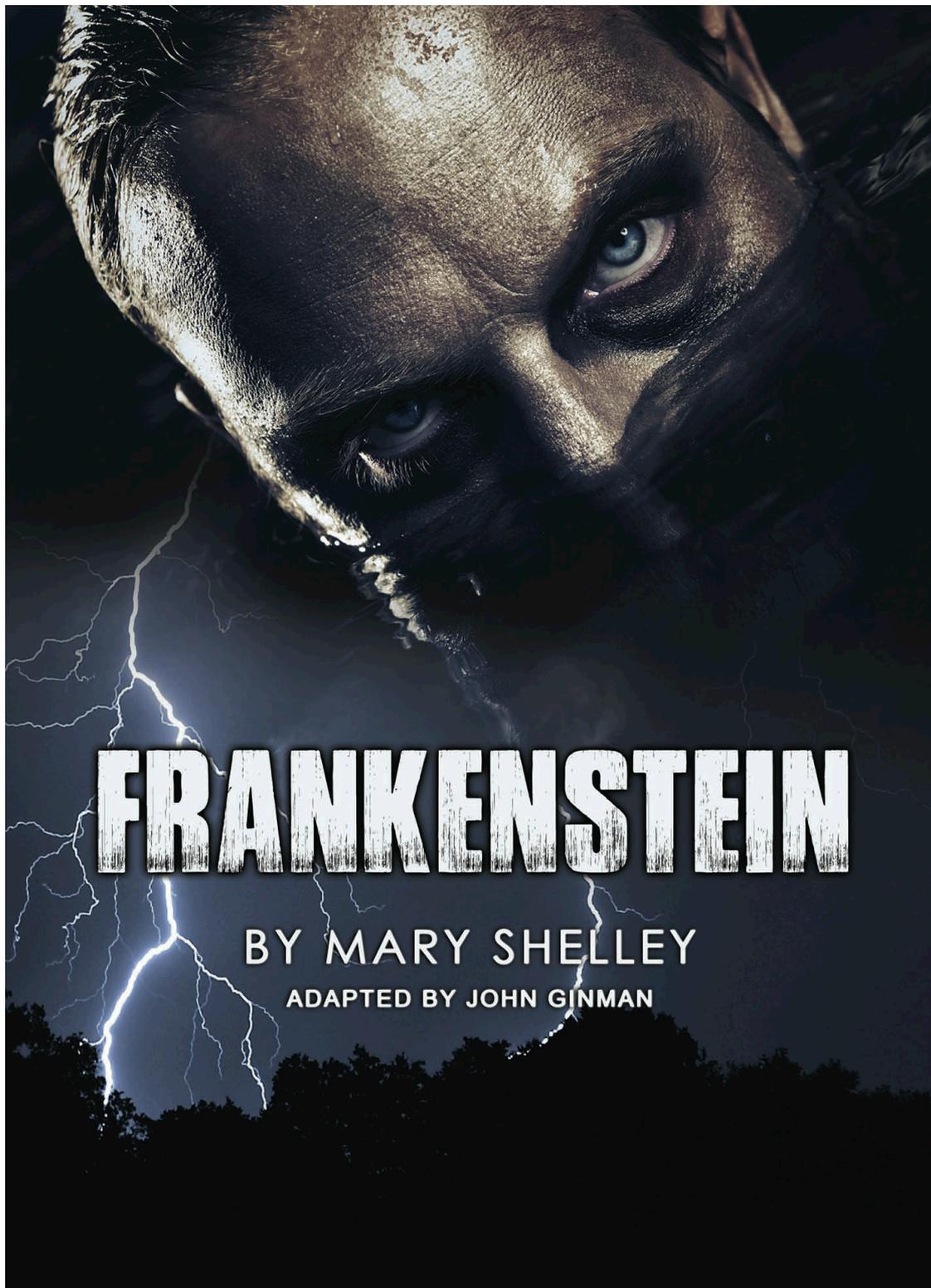


BLACKEYED
THEATRE



FRANKENSTEIN

BY MARY SHELLEY

ADAPTED BY JOHN GINMAN

Media Pack

www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk

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Frankenstein
By Mary Shelley
Adapted by John Ginman

Produced by Blackeyed Theatre
in association with South Hill Park Arts Centre

Cast

Victor Frankenstein	Ben Warwick
Elizabeth Lavenza	Lara Cowin
Henry Clerval	Max Gallagher
The Creature	Louis Labovitch
Robert Walton	Ashley Sean-Cook

All other parts played by members of the cast

Creative Team

Writer	John Ginman
Composer	Ron McAllister
Director	Eliot Giuralarocca
Musical Director	Ellie Verkerk
Puppets & Puppetry	Yvonne Stone
Set Designer	Victoria Spearing
Lighting Designer	Charlotte McClelland
Costume Designer	Anne Thomson
Education Advisor	Danielle Corbishley
Producer	Adrian McDougall
Press Relations	Chloe Nelkin Consulting

BLACKEYED THEATRE

Tour Dates – Autumn 2016

22 – 24 September	Wilde Theatre 7.45pm (+11pm Fri)	Bracknell
27 September	The Lights 7.30pm	Andover
28 September	Octagon Theatre 7.30pm	Yeovil
29 September – 1 October	The Haymarket 7.30pm (+2pm Sat)	Basingstoke
3 – 6 October	Theatre Severn 7.30pm (+2.30pm Wed & Thu)	Shrewsbury
7 October	Mechanics 7.30pm	Burnley
11 – 12 October	Corn Exchange 7.45pm	Newbury
13 October	Stahl Theatre 7.45pm	Oundle
14 October	Arts at Stowe 8pm	Stowe
16 October	Palace Theatre 7.30pm	Mansfield
17 – 18 October	Gala Theatre 7.30pm	Durham
19 October	Middlesbrough Theatre 7.30pm	Middlesbrough
20 October	Alnwick Playhouse 7.30pm	Alnwick
21 October	Queens Hall 7.30pm	Hexham
22 October	Brunton Theatre 7.30pm	Musselburgh
25 October	Macrobert 7.30pm	Stirling
26 – 27 October	Adam Smith Theatre 7.30pm (+10.30am Thu)	Kirkcaldy
28 – 29 October	Dundee Rep 7.30pm (+2.30pm Sat)	Dundee
31 October – 1 November	Towngate Theatre 7.30pm	Basildon
3 November	New Theatre Royal 7.30pm	Portsmouth
4 November	Berry Theatre 7.30pm	Eastleigh
5 November	Thomas Hardy School Theatre 7pm	Dorchester
8 November	The Woodville 7.30pm	Gravesend

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11 November	Trinity Theatre 8pm	Tunbridge Wells
12 November	Theatre Royal 7.30pm	Margate
15 – 16 November	Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre 7.30pm	Taunton
17 – 19 November	Devonshire Park 7.45pm (+1.30pm Fri)	Eastbourne
22 November	Stantonbury Theatre 7.30pm	Milton-Keynes
23 – 24 November	Waterside Arts Centre 7.30pm (+1.30pm Wed)	Manchester
25 November	Brewery Arts Centre 8pm	Kendal
26 November	The Atkinson 7.30pm	Southport
28 – 30 November	Mumford Theatre 7.30pm	Cambridge
1 – 3 December	Arena Theatre 7.30pm (+1pm Fri)	Wolverhampton

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Press Release

Blackeyed Theatre, in association with South Hill Park, presents

Frankenstein

By Mary Shelley. Adapted by John Ginman

UK Tour Autumn 2016 – Spring 2017

Marking the bicentenary of the creation of *Frankenstein*, Blackeyed Theatre's brand new stage adaptation of Mary Shelley's gothic horror masterpiece embarks on a five-month UK tour.

Geneva, 1816 - Victor Frankenstein obsesses in pursuit of nature's secret, the elixir of life itself. But nothing can prepare him for what he creates. So begins a gripping life or death adventure taking him to the ends of the earth and beyond.

Adapted by John Ginman, who penned Blackeyed Theatre's hugely successful 2013 production of *Dracula*, this world premiere fuses bold ensemble storytelling, live music, puppetry and stunning theatricality to create a fresh telling of what has become a landmark work of literature.

A unique feature of the production is the use of Bunraku-style puppetry to portray The Creature. Designed and built by Yvonne Stone (*Warhorse*, *His Dark Materials*), the full size 6'4" puppet, which needs up to 3 people to manipulate it, adds an exciting new dimension to the retelling of the classic story.

Director Eliot Giuralarocca says, *I'm really excited to be directing Frankenstein. It's a taut, gripping thriller, an exciting gothic fairy tale for grown-ups and a morality play all rolled into one. It's always a daunting challenge to attempt to breathe new life into a classic but with a wonderful ensemble cast and a fusion of bold storytelling, music, sound and Bunraku-style puppetry I'm hoping we can bring Mary Shelley's gothic fairy tale kicking and screaming into life!*

John Ginman comments, *Working on this has left me full of admiration for the achievement of the nineteen-year-old novice writer, who responded to the challenge of inventing a ghost story 'to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart'. This version seeks to provoke thought and discussion around many key issues that have renewed significance for us today including the ethics of genetic experimentation, and the causes of violent behaviour in some marginalised social groups.*

The cast includes Ben Warwick as Victor Frankenstein (seasons at The National Theatre, Theatre Royal York, Royal Theatre Northampton, Watford Palace and The Finborough), Max Gallagher as Henry Clerval (*Home Fires* - ITV, *James & The Giant Peach* - Sell A Door, *PIAF* - Charing Cross/Bridewell), Lara Cowin as Elizabeth Lavenza (*The Obfuscati* - Theatre 503, *Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom* - Fiery Angel), Louis Labovitch (*STOMP!* - US tour, *Leave Hitler to Me* - Arts Theatre) and Ashley Sean-Cook (*The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* - Children's Touring Partnership, *My Pet Monster & Me* – Blunderbus UK tour).

The production is supported by The National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Ends

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'Selling Points'

Below are a few notable facts about the production

It is exactly 200 years since Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*. She spent the Summer of 1816 at Lake Geneva with the poet Lord Byron, his doctor John Polidori, and Percy Shelley. Because of the poor weather they stayed indoors and read ghost stories to each other, the result of which was a writing competition that inspired Mary to pen the first draft of what would become one of the most famous novels ever written.

The production is a world premiere: Commissioned by Blackeyed Theatre, this stage version of *Frankenstein* by John Ginman has never been seen before.

The creature will be created through puppetry: Blackeyed Theatre has commissioned puppet maker, Yvonne Stone, to create a full-size (6'4" high) creature, which will be operated by up to three actors at any one time. Yvonne, whose credits include the National Theatre's *Warhorse*, has vast experience as both a puppet maker and puppetry director.

Frankenstein is recommended and prescribed reading on many A-Level, AS-Level and GCSE English syllabuses. It has become one of the most analysed literary texts of the modern age.

The production reunites the *Dracula* artistic team: The same core artistic team behind Blackeyed Theatre's hugely successful 2013/2014 production of *Dracula* (John Ginman as writer, Ron McAllister as Composer, Eliot Giuralarocca as Director, Ellie Verkerk as Musical Director, Victoria Spearing as Designer and Charlotte McClelland as Lighting Designer) returns for *Frankenstein*.

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Press Quotes

"One of the most innovative, audacious companies working in contemporary English theatre"

The Stage

"beautifully adapted for the stage by Stephen Sharkey and realised by a fantastic cast and creative team..."

...evokes all the glitz, glamour and tragic romance of the Jazz Age in 1920s America...

...a vibrant, fast-paced production that holds all the energy of a West End musical and all the complexity of the original text...

...a tight, dynamic and highly entertaining production that is well worth seeing"

The Culture Trip on *The Great Gatsby*

★★★★

"A sparkling 'Jazz Age' snapshot...immensely accomplished"

Remote Goat on *The Great Gatsby*

"Truly electrifying theatre...the Roaring Twenties atmosphere is superbly captured...brimming with fine acting ability"

Eastbourne Herald on *The Great Gatsby*

"if you at some point find yourself brought back in your seat given the ecstasy of the performances, then you might quietly acknowledge the tenacity and talent of all those involved who do so much with so little... an exquisitely entertaining play and an excellent two hours at the theatre"

Dundee Review of the Arts on *The Great Gatsby*

★★★★

"Great clarity and theatrical ingenuity... A production that really should be seen"

What's On Stage on *Dracula*

★★★★★

"Unique, immersive and totally mesmerising"

The Public Reviews on *Dracula*

★★★★★

"Amazing production; Faultless execution; Brilliant"

Remote Goat on *The Trial*

★★★★★

Behind The Arras on *Oh What A Lovely War*

★★★★

What's On Stage on *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

"Professional, exciting, historical political theatre, ideal for the Brecht lover"

Reviews Gate on *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*

"Magnificent...Extraordinary...As haunting as it is harrowing...Astonishing power... Any assumption that Oh! What a Lovely War is a period piece is shot to shrapnel. Forty years on, we need Littlewood's vision more than ever. Blackeyed Theatre restore it to us with astonishing power. Catch it if you can"

The Stage on *Oh What A Lovely War*

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Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley

Mary was born in 1797. Her parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft were both writers. Her father was famous for his revolutionary ideas about politics and society, and her mother was a pioneer in feminist writing. The new and radical ideas of her father, mother and her future husband Percy Shelley, along with the education she received and continued throughout her life would shape how she approached the world and her writing.

Her mother died just 10 days after Mary was born. Life was difficult for her father who was often in debt, and Mary did not get on well with her step mother, but formed a close friendship with her step-sister Claire Clairmont.

When Mary was 17, she ran away with Percy Shelley, a famous poet she had met two years before. He was married to a woman named Harriet, and Percy and Harriet had been friends of Mary's father.

Mary gave birth to her and Percy's first child, but sadly the baby died two weeks later. Percy's wife Harriet drowned herself in 1816. Percy quickly married Mary and they had three more children together, but only one survived. Mary suffered a lot of loss during her life, her half sister Fanny, three of her children, her parents, her husband and friends.

Whilst Percy, Mary and her stepsister Claire were spending the summer with the poet Lord Byron in Geneva, *Frankenstein* was written. The weather was bad and so the group spent much of their time reading and writing together. They particularly enjoyed working their way through *Fantasmagoriana*, a collection of German ghost stories.

The story Mary composed, which later became *Frankenstein*, drew on recent scientific progress of the time and the writings of Luigi Galvani. Galvani was a physicist who had discovered that muscles in human and animal tissue conduct and react to electricity. *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* was published two years later, in 1818.

Percy Shelley drowned in a storm whilst sailing near Italy in 1822. Mary was only 24 and never remarried.

Mary wrote many other books, as well as *Frankenstein*. Her 1823 novel *Valperga*, was a fictionalised account of the 14th Century despot Castracani, who forces the woman he loves to choose between love and political freedom. She chooses freedom. *The Last Man* was an early science fiction novel, set in a post-apocalyptic world. It reflects the several deaths she grieved of literary friends, and attacks the failures of the revolutionary political ideas of the time to bring about real change. She also wrote many travel novels, was an accomplished editor, and was instrumental in editing and publishing many of the published collections of her husband's writing.

Mary died in 1851 at the age of 53, most likely from a brain tumour, which had given her years of headaches and occasional muscle paralysis.

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Frankenstein – The Novel

Frankenstein was the first story Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley ever wrote. The original version was published in 1818, and was rapidly reimagined as a stage play that was hugely popular. Many other theatrical adaptations followed. The first edition of the book was published anonymously. Sometimes women needed to do this to counter negative reactions from the male dominated publishing industry. Writing as a profession was very uncommon for women at this time. A second edition, published in Paris in 1823, did cite Mary as the author.

A further edition in 1831 saw Mary make significant changes, in particular toning down the insinuation of something controversial in the love affair between Victor and his adopted sister. She also changed the frame narrative; the original was structured into 3 sections, but the newer version flows through, chapter after chapter.

The original version had an extract from Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, at its start: *Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay To mould me man? Did I solicit thee From darkness to promote me?*

This epigraph reflects the implicit questioning of religion and Christianity in her dark and complex ethical story. This was removed in later editions, perhaps due to fears of upsetting the Church.

In the preface to the 1831 edition, Mary talks of her writing process, alluding to its similarities with scientific 'creation', and of Victor Frankenstein's actions. She writes '*Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos*'. This following statement sheds some light on how she worked as a writer, drawing existing ideas together to make a story. Her ideas do not come out of nowhere, and this perhaps reflects her later success as an editor of others' writing, her ability to rework and improve existing material. She also writes '*Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it*'.

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Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus - Synopsis

Robert Walton, an English captain, whose boat is trapped in ice north of Russia, discovers a mysterious man, travelling across the snowy tundra of the North Pole on a dog-pulled sledge. In letters to his sister, Walton retells the story of this man, Victor Frankenstein. Victor Frankenstein shares his life story with Walton, his childhood in Geneva, his love for his adopted sister Elizabeth, and his friendship with Henry Clerval.

In his childhood Victor was a great reader and was fascinated with the supernatural and occult writers, whilst his adopted sister and friend are interested in poetry and romantic writing. His mother dies, and he travels to University in Ingolstadt where he redirects his attentions to the teachings of rational science, chemistry, biology and the study of electricity. Merging the two areas of study, that most would perceive to be in conflict, he discovers the secret of life. By robbing graves, he collects the body parts he needs to create an anatomically complete human, and uses electricity to give it life. The Creature comes alive, but is horrible to look at, its flesh barely covering its muscles and bones. Victor is horrified and abandons his creation. The Creature disappears, Frankenstein becomes ill and Clerval, who has come to visit, cares for him before Victor sets out to find the monster.

Victor learns of the death of his brother William, who was strangled. A family servant is accused of the murder but Victor, seeing the Creature in the same city, believes otherwise. The servant, Justine, is convicted and executed for the murder, Victor says nothing but feels immense guilt.

As Frankenstein travels on Mont Blanc, he finds the Creature who tells him his own story, learning language and human behaviour from secretly watching a family, reading and studying literature and poetry. He talks of reactions of terror and disgust from those that he encounters. He is called 'monster' and chased away and beaten. The Creature is lonely and angry and demands that Victor make him a female companion. Victor agrees on the condition that the Creature never return to Europe.

Whilst making the companion, Victor begins to prepare to marry Elizabeth, but is conscious of the jealousy that the Creature will feel, so endeavours to complete the female first. Tortured by ideas of the two creatures breeding and becoming a threat to society, he destroys what is working on. The Creature, witnessing this, threatens Victor and soon after, Henry Clerval's body is found. Victor is accused of the murder but later cleared of the charges. Despite the Creature's threat, Victor decides to marry Elizabeth, but she is murdered on their wedding night. Frankenstein sets out to track and kill the Creature, and ends up following him across the North Pole.

At this point we are up to the present time, and Walton's letters to his sister talk of the other problems of their boat and their journey. The boat crew plan to return to England, but Frankenstein refuses to abandon his search for the Creature. Frankenstein's health fails and he dies. Shortly afterwards the Creature is found in Victor's room, he gives a speech over the body, grieving the loss of his chance for peace and companionship, and promises to burn himself to death in the North Pole, leaps out of the window and disappears into the night.

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Adapting Frankenstein

Any stage adaptation of a novel should aim to create an essentially theatrical experience. In this case, more than 200 pages of prose fiction are translated into two hours of live performance. There is no such thing as a definitive stage version, as any treatment has to take account of many elements that are particular to its staging: the resources available, the circumstances of performance, and the values and expectations of company and audiences. I've worked with Blackeyed Theatre before (on *Dracula* in 2013) and I'm familiar with their approach: a small cast of multi-skilled performers use elements of spoken text, music, sound and visuals to create powerful performance events that can be toured to a wide range of venues. So I've had the company very much in mind while working on the script.

Since its first publication in 1818, *Frankenstein* has inspired many stage adaptations. As early as 1823 Richard Brinsley Peake wrote a version called *Presumption; or, The Fate of Frankenstein*. It took great liberties with the narrative, and made the action and the character-types conform to the melodramatic conventions of the day: Victor had a comic assistant, called Fritz, Elizabeth became Victor's sister and was wooed by Henry Clerval. Mary Shelley's framing narrative with James Walton was cut completely. The Creature (named the Monster in Peake's version) was not given any dialogue to speak. Some of the staging must have been spectacular: including a final scene in which Victor and the Monster are annihilated in an onstage avalanche, accompanied by loud thunder and a heavy fall of snow. The popularity of the show inspired the publication of a second edition of the novel. But this version for Blackeyed Theatre uses a very different approach.

We respect the novel's multi-layered way of telling the story. *Frankenstein* is carefully constructed like a set of Russian dolls: it has a story within a story within a story. At the core of the book is the Creature's account of the experiences that have formed him, and we include it, told in the Creature's own words. One strength of the novel is the way Mary Shelley uses her story to explore complex ethical issues. The Creature's voice is crucial to this.

The outer frame of the Walton narrative is also retained, not just to provide us with distance from the incredible story Victor has to tell, but to realise Shelley's astonishing insights into the psychology of men who push themselves (and others) to the limits in order to make new discoveries. Walton contains the seeds of more tragedy, and we watch him responding to Victor's tale. At the point when Walton and Victor meet, neither man's story is complete. So there is tension in observing the fates of these two driven men. Will they learn from Victor's experiences, and if so, what? For us, that has become the focusing spine of the action.

In my view the book has weaknesses, and as playwright it is my task is either to minimise these, or use them creatively. Surprisingly perhaps, given the radical household in which Shelley grew up, the novel's female characters can seem woefully conventional and flat, very much there to function as foils for the more fully realised men. It is particularly important that we come to value Elizabeth in her own right, so that her fate really engages us. I have given her more substance and agency as a character, while respecting the social norms of period and place. There are also a number of improbabilities in the plot - for example, how is Victor able to

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access the many body parts needed for the second Creature while working on a completely isolated Scottish island? In this case, the how of the process is far less important than the consequences of Victor's actions when the body is completed, and we have focused the action accordingly.

In compressing the action for a two-hour performance, it has been necessary to remove characters and whole episodes. The guiding principles here have been to work not just with the three-dimensional storytelling outlined above, but to engage with the novel's underlying genre and story structure. At heart, Frankenstein is a tragedy, that of an over-reacher who comes to grief - like Doctor Faustus in Christopher Marlowe's play of that name. It also develops into an exciting tale of revenge, with both Victor and the Creature seeking to avenge personal wrongs.

This version is also inspired by Shelley's keen interest in some of the most advanced scientific thinking of her day, in particular Galvanism, and Humphry Davy's work on the creative potential of Electricity. She was living through a time in which the pace of scientific discovery was rapid, and Science seemed able to empower Mankind in almost superhuman ways. We also draw on her romantic interest in the sublime as made manifest in wild and challenging landscapes: much of the action takes place in exciting Alpine and Arctic settings. There is also a strong literary background, for example the explicit parallels made with John Milton's Paradise Lost - we retain these but in a limited way, concerned that these might confuse rather than enrich the action for audiences unfamiliar with Milton's poem.

Peake sought to inspire wonder in his audience by the realistic staging of dramatic natural events. Today film and television are better equipped to provide spectacle of that kind. So we use language, visuals and sound (including puppetry) in more suggestive ways, aiming to engage the imagination of the audience - and hopefully creating a unique energy and rapport at each performance.

Therefore, the prime aim is to create a compelling theatrical event, but this version also seeks to provoke thought and discussion around many key issues that have renewed significance for us today: for example, the ethics of genetic experimentation, and the causes of violent behaviour in some marginalised social groups. When it was first published, Shelley's novel attracted many hostile reviews, because it engages directly with themes that were considered taboo. Is its material in any way taboo today? What is not in doubt is the complexity of the debate she wishes the reader to engage in about the themes of the novel. Working on this has left me full of admiration for the achievement of the nineteen-year-old novice writer, who responded to the challenge of inventing a ghost story 'to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart' by writing a book that is still widely read, and which has inspired innumerable adaptations for screen and stage.

John Ginman
April 2016

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Directing *Frankenstein*

Interview with Eliot Giuralarocca

1. What's been your most rewarding experience as a director?

This is such a difficult question to answer; like being asked which one of your children is your favourite! All the shows I've directed for Blackeyed Theatre have been extremely enjoyable, challenging and rewarding in differing ways, but I suppose if I had to pick the one that was most rewarding, I'd go for Blackeyed theatre's production of 'Not About Heroes' a two-hander that charted the relationship between Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon and marked the 100 year anniversary of the outbreak of World War I.

I spent what seemed like an eternity reading the script and thinking 'what on earth am I going to do with this?!' I knew that I didn't want to give the audience an easy set of assumptions to work with and a naturalistic set - which perhaps might be the expectation - with leather armchairs, desks, bookcases, sandbags and barbed wire - an approach that just didn't fire my imagination. So instead, working closely with the designer Victoria Spearing, we came up with a set that was part art installation and part a memorial to the war and consisted of piles of books and about fifteen Dada inspired 'figures' that created the environment and sculptured the space in which the story unfolded. It allowed Charlotte McClelland to create incredible shadows with her mood enhancing lighting which in unison with Clive Elkington's striking video projections seem to me to give us a visual equivalent of a poem, at once concrete and specific yet still allowing an audience room to create their own interpretations.

We were also blessed with two fantastic actors in Ben Ashton and James Howard who worked incredibly hard in the rehearsal room and gave pitch perfect performances, and the whole thing was beautifully underscored by Tom Neil's haunting music and subtle sound design. Once a show is up and running, you often sit in the audience watching and thinking, 'If I could start again I wish I'd done this or that slightly differently' but I was really pleased with this one. All the different components of the show just seemed to blend together seamlessly and I really enjoyed watching it! It felt like we had taken a risk that had paid off. Audiences seemed to enjoy it too and that was very satisfying.

2. What was it that enticed you to take on *Frankenstein*?

I didn't need much enticing to be fair. Adrian McDougall the Artistic Director of Blackeyed Theatre approached me with the idea and I jumped at the chance to do it! I knew the novel well and really loved it. It's a cracking, gripping, classic story that has stood the test of time and when you are presented with an opportunity to have a go at something like that you simply have to grasp it with both hands. I'd directed *Dracula* for the company a couple of years previously and had really enjoyed trying to meet the challenges that the gothic horror genre presented. Working on the show was a very creative experience and thankfully, *Dracula* proved to be very popular with audiences too. John Ginman, who had adapted the novel for the stage really well had also been commissioned to adapt Mary Shelley's novel and that, along with

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having the same artistic team that I'd used on Dracula on board for Frankenstein was also very reassuring. Working with the same creative team means that we have a creative shorthand and a vital sense of complicity which means that I at least start a project with hope!

3. What do you perceive to be the main tasks and challenges with directing this adaptation?

We have a cast of five performers to tell the story and I think it's definitely going to be a busy show for them, a real ensemble piece with a bold 'actor led' performance style. I envisage the company on stage all the time bringing the story to life and moving fluidly from one location to the next, puppeteering, changing roles, manipulating objects, moving furniture, creating environments, playing instruments and underscoring the action with percussion, voice and sound as necessary. We've been quite ambitious with the vision for this piece with the inclusion of live music and sound as well as the challenge of puppeteering a 6'4" Bunraku style Creature, so just getting the show up and ready in the short rehearsal time available will definitely be challenging, but going for a bold form of storytelling that is focused on the actors' ability to transform is, I'm sure, the right way to go. With the creature needing three performers to manipulate and animate it, working out which actor will be free and when is a logistical challenge in itself and I'm sure there will be times when it will feel like directing traffic in Trafalgar Square! I'm a great believer that theatre is often most potent when it is most simple and I think one of my main tasks will be to try and find the the most economical but theatrically inventive way to tell this story while creating a dynamic environment in which the actors can really play, discover, create and ultimately take ownership of the material themselves. The performers have a long tour ahead, so it's important that they feel fully invested in the artistic creation of the work. The discovery of the theatrical style and the set of story-telling conventions that we will use to serve this particular story will of course be a big challenge and one that will only fully reveal itself in the rehearsal room.

4. What's the vision, and what are you hoping to achieve in terms of style?

I suppose for me, one of my touchstones for this piece was that the structure of Mary Shelley's novel takes the form of a story that contains other stories within it. We start with Captain Robert Walton's story recounting his journey to the North Pole where he meets an exhausted, half-dead Frankenstein. He in turn, proceeds to tell the story of his life and within that story we find another story, the Creature's story. This 'Russian doll' structure sparked my imagination. For me Frankenstein suddenly felt like a dark gothic fairy tale with a nightmarish and dream like quality that seemed to flow from this. It struck me that those that didn't know the novel and who were watching in the theatre without any preconceptions might question how reliable Frankenstein is? Could what he says be true? Has he hallucinated the whole thing? Is he in fact a raving madman?...Dramatically, all we know for sure is that he's telling a story. And so I decided that we should embrace this element and absolutely make the fact that he's telling the story the focal point of the piece. So we 'set' the play on the ship upon which Frankenstein clammers aboard, as that is the only thing that we know to be real, and in turn the ship ropes and crates and the materials and the furniture that he finds there become what he uses, and we use theatrically, to help to tell his story. The creature too therefore has elements and accents of this world of the ship, of cloth and rope and sack and stiches, something that has literally been brought to life by Frankenstein as if wrenched from the set. For me, the beauty and excitement of

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theatre is that it is live, unfolding in front of you as you watch and having the creature as a life-sized Bunraku style puppet seemed to fit perfectly with this approach. Frankenstein is obsessed with finding the spark of creation, the 'elix of life' and bringing to life dead matter. I hope that we will mirror this by bringing the creature to life theatrically, animating, manipulating and giving life to the puppet in front of the audience and hopefully giving them the illusion that it has a life of it's own. It seemed to me to be a lovely theatrical metaphor for the act of creation in the story and I hope that audiences will embrace it.

5. What can the audience expect from this production?

A show that celebrates the excitement of live theatre using inventive, bold storytelling to bring Mary Shelley's dark gothic thriller to life using puppetry, live music and sound and utilising all the skills and abilities that our company of 5 performers possess. If audiences leave the theatre excited and entertained by what they've seen as well as being moved and challenged by the complex moral questions that this tale provokes, I'd be delighted!

BL@CKEYED T H E A T R E

Creating puppetry for *Frankenstein*

Interview with Yvonne Stone

1. What do you love most about puppetry as a performance device?

I love the way that puppetry allows you to reassess the everyday. There is a certain wonder in seeing a puppet do even the most mundane things, much in the same way as we marvel at a baby learning to walk and pick things up. I come from an art and theatre background and puppetry is the perfect blend of these disciplines. It is such a complete creative process.

2. What was it that enticed you to take on *Frankenstein*?

I was very excited to work with Blackeyed Theatre. It is the first time they have worked with puppetry and they have been so respectful of the process which is such a pleasure. Every show I work on is so different and *Frankenstein* seems the ultimate making experience - in a way I am *Frankenstein* beavering away in my workshop creating this monster!

3. What have been the main challenges with designing and making *The Creature*?

There have been many challenges with the project. The sheer scale of the tour is a challenge in itself, trying to create something that can do this number of venues with hopefully very little maintenance. Making lightweight puppets is also a huge challenge, particularly if you want them to be this durable as well. I have really tried to push my making skills on this project, trying to create a puppet that can hopefully express real subtleties of movement despite his large size.

4. For you, what does the use of puppetry for *The Creature* add to the story?

The story of *Frankenstein* is all about bringing life to an inanimate object and using puppetry perfectly embodies this. As the electricity enters the creature we see the puppeteers breath life in to him. Puppets also have slightly different rules to humans which gives us so many possibilities.

5. How do you hope audiences will feel about *The Creature*?

I've grown really fond of *The Creature* as I've been making him so I really hope that the audience feel some empathy for him. He didn't ask to be created by *Frankenstein* and even though he obviously does some terrible things throughout the play he is quite a tortured soul and I hope that comes across.

BLACKEYED THEATRE

Box Office Information

Title	Frankenstein
Author	Adapted from Mary Shelley's novel by John Ginman
Company	Blackeyed Theatre - www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk
Running time	Approx 125 minutes including interval
Type of event	Play (with music)
Style of work	Innovative, high energy theatre using ensemble storytelling, live music and puppetry.
Description	A brand new adaptation of Mary Shelley's Gothic horror masterpiece fusing ensemble storytelling, live music and stunning theatricality. From the artistic team behind Blackeyed Theatre's hugely successful 2013 production of <i>Dracula</i> , <i>Frankenstein</i> promises a fresh, exciting take on what is widely considered to be a landmark work of romantic, gothic and science fiction literature.
Warnings	None
Age suitability	11+
Number of performers	5
Additional activities	Post-show Q&As may be available. Please check with venue. Schools workshops available. Contact company for details. Education pack available from www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk

BLACKEYED THEATRE

Cast Biographies



Ben Warwick – Victor Frankenstein

Ben trained at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

His recent theatre credits include Rochester in ***Jane Eyre*** (Rosemary Branch) and the lead in ***The Trench*** (Les Enfants Terribles UK tour). Other notable credits include ***Hamlet*** (English Touring Theatre) and ***Look Back In Anger*** (Lichfield Garrick), along with seasons at The National Theatre, Theatre Royal York, Royal Theatre Northampton, Watford Palace, The Orange Tree, The Soho Theatre, The Finborough and The Folktearten Gothenberg.

Ben's feature films include ***Blood Moon***, ***War Game*** and ***Canakkale Yolun Sonu***, while his TV credits include ***Mary Queen of Scots*** (BBC) and ***Emmerdale*** (ITV).



Lara Cowin – Elizabeth Lavenza

Lara trained at Guildford School of Acting and gained a Class 1 BA (Hons) Drama and Theatre Arts Degree from the University of Birmingham.

Her theatre credits include ***Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom*** (No. 1 UK Tour), ***A Midsummer Night's Dream*** (Courtyard Theatre), ***Hidden – The FCO Plays*** (Barons Court Theatre & Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict), ***The Obfuscati*** (Theatre 503), ***Futurespark*** (Luton Arts Centre), ***Dinner*** (Barons Court Theatre), ***La Boheme*** (Soho Theatre) and ***After Mrs Rochester*** (Electric Theatre).

Lara's site specific theatre credits include work with Guildford Shakespeare Company, How It Ended Productions and Les Enfants Terribles.

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Max Gallagher – Henry Clerval

Max comes from Kingston upon Hull and graduated from Rose Bruford College in 2012 with a 1st BA (Hons) in Actor Musicianship.

His Television credits include includes Telegram Boy in **Home Fires** (ITV).

His work in theatre includes Centipede and Aunt Spiker in **James and the Giant Peach** (Sell a Door UK, Doha, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Hong Kong Tour), Hindley in **Wuthering Heights the Musical** (Iris Theatre/Actors Church, Covent Garden), Louis and Theo in **PIAF** (Bridewell Theatre and Charing Cross Theatre), Sam in **Oh No! Not Snow!** (Royal and Derngate, Northampton), Babi Babbett in **The Comedy of Babi Babbett** (Rude Mechanical Theatre Company UK Tour), The Duke of Amalfi in **The Duchess of Amalfi's Steward** (Sam Wannamaker Playhouse, Globe Theatre), Knave of Hearts in **Alice in Wonderland** and Musician of Bremen in **Grimm Tales' Winter Gala** (Grimm Productions), Colin Craven in **The Secret Garden**, The Officer in **The Comedy of Errors** and a Witch in **Macbeth** (Grosvenor Park Open Air Theatre, Chester), Frank in **The A-Z of Mrs P** (Southwark Playhouse), Simple Simon in **Jack & the Giant** (Chipping Norton Theatre), Sparkish in **Love, Lies & Lust** (Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch), Scripps in **The History Boys** (Mercury Theatre, Colchester) and Rafi in **Rapunzel** (York Theatre Royal/tutti frutti Productions UK & International Tour).

Max's Musical Director, Composer and Arranger credits include **PIAF** (Assistant MD and Arranger), **The Comedy of Errors** (Performance MD), **Parade** (MD and Arranger), **The Tempest** and **Futurists** (MD and Composer).

BLAKEYED THEATRE



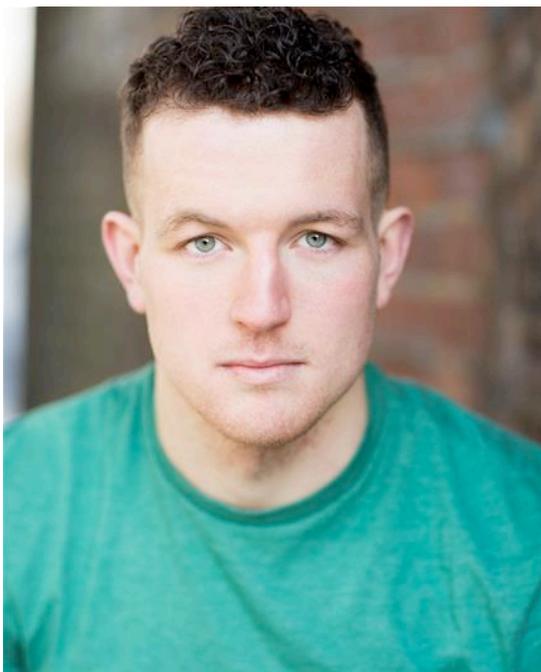
Louis Labovitch – Voice of the Creature

Louis studied percussion and theatre at California State University before completing a post-graduate qualification at LAMDA in London.

He has just finished a two-month run in the West End as Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night* (Grassroots Shakespeare), and prior to that spent six months performing a variety of roles in *Venezia the Story* (Teatro San Gallo, Venice). He has also worked in South Korea on an original musical for children, *The Little Dragon*, and toured America for four years with the musical *STOMP!*

Louis's other stage credits include *Peter Pan The Musical* (Gordon Craig Theatre, Stevenage), *Sherlock Holmes* (The Pantaloons UK tour), Lorca in *Olives and Blood* (Brixton East) and *Leave Hitler To Me, Lad* (Arts Theatre and UK tour).

Louis' film credits include Dr Edward Stanton in *The Scopia Effect* (Flynn Film Co), due for release in 2016, while for radio he's played JD Salinger in *Salinger in England* and recorded two series of *Tales Of The City* (both BBC Radio 4).



Ashley Sean-Cook – Robert Walton

Ashley graduated from the BA Acting course at Northampton School of the Arts in 2014.

His theatre credits include *Might Never Happen* (Doll's Eye Theatre Company at the Kings Head), *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Children's Touring Partnership), *Little Victorians*, *World War One*, *Shakespeare at Night* (Phileas Fogg Theatre), *My Pet Monster and Me* and *The Duck in the Truck* (Blunderbus Theatre Company UK tours).

Ashley has developed a huge passion for puppetry since graduating and produced and directed his own show, *Sell-By-Date*, which has toured various fringe venues.

BLACKEYED THEATRE

Creatives' Biographies

John Ginman – Writer

John has been working professionally in UK theatre as a director and writer for twenty-five years, including periods as Associate Director at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry and the Nuffield Theatre, Southampton, as Director of Theatre at South Hill Park Arts Centre, and as Artistic Director at the Swan Theatre, Worcester and at Contact Theatre, Manchester. During the 1990s he wrote and directed extensively for the Midlands Arts Centre in Birmingham. He specialises in the direction of Shakespeare, the main-stream European repertoire (including Brecht, Molière, and Wedekind), large-scale community projects, and work for children and young people, in addition to developing plays by new writers. In collaboration with the composer Colin Riley, he has also directed and written the libretti for three operas, including *Noir* (Purcell Room, 1995), *Gulliver* (Malvern, 1995) and *Science Fictions* (CD release and the Drill Hall, London, 1998). He is Convenor of the MA Writing for Performance programme at Goldsmiths College, London.

Ron McAllister - Composer

Ron was born in Glasgow, studied music at Glasgow University and then went on to complete a post grad in Theatre Studies at University College, Cardiff. He composed music for many shows in Glasgow which were performed at Glasgow Arts Centre (*Agamemnon*, *Woyzeck*, *The Hard Man*) before moving South to take up the position of Head of Music for South Hill Park Arts Centre. At South Hill Park, Ron wrote music for many shows and musically directed many others (*Chicago*, *Girls of Slender Means*, *Trafford Tanzi*). He also received commissions from the Scottish Arts Council to write music for Scottish Youth Theatre's productions from 1984-1988 (including Jonathan Harvey's *The Colonist*, John McGrath's *The Games A Bogey* and Denise Coffey's *Lizzie's Strategy*). He wrote and conducted a large site-specific piece - *Putting The Sun In Its Place*, performed by the Scottish Chamber Orchestra with Scottish Youth Theatre at the Glasgow Garden Festival in 1988. In 1990 Ron launched an arts centre in the Borders (*The Maltings in Berwick Upon Tweed*), working as Artistic Director there for two and a half years, and his musical adaptation of *James and The Giant Peach* toured nationally from there in 1991. Later in 1991 Ron moved to Huddersfield to become founder director of the Lawrence Batley Theatre, which he launched in 1994. In 1995 he produced his first opera there, as a co-production with Opera North - *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Ron has continued to compose for theatre since then, most recently from his base at South Hill Park Arts Centre, where he was appointed Chief Executive in 2001. Previous composing work include *Dracula*, *The Resisitable Rise of Arturo Ui* and *Oedipus* (national tours with Blackeyed Theatre), Shakespeare's *R&J* (Original Theatre) and the last ten pantomimes in the Wilde Theatre.

Eliot Giuralarocca - Director

Eliot studied English Language and Literature at Christ Church, Oxford before training at the Guildford school of Acting.

BLACKEYED THEATRE

Directing credits include national tours of *The Great Gatsby*, *Not About Heroes* and *Dracula* for Blackeyed Theatre, *The Imperfect Pearl*, (Whitehouse Productions), *West Side Story*, (Belgrade Theatre/Armonico Consort), *Baroque Around the Block* and *Monteverdi's Flying Circus* (Armonico Consort), *Knackerman* (White Bear Theatre), *Three Servants* and *Voyagers* (Jet Theatre/Croydon Warehouse), and *The Love Letters of Private Blade* (Riverside Studios).

Work as an Actor includes *The Beekeeper*, (Blackeyed Theatre, OFFIE nominated for Best Actor), *Alarms and Excursions*, (Chipping Norton), *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Liverpool Playhouse/Nottingham Playhouse), *Il Turco In Italia* (Royal Opera House); *Measure for Measure* (Thelma Holt Productions); *A Small Family Business* (Watford Palace Theatre); *Don't Look Now* (Sheffield Theatres/Lyric Hammersmith); *The Comedy of Errors* and *Titus Andronicus* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Twelfth Night* (Royal Exchange Manchester), *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and *Horse and Carriage* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* (Nuffield Theatre Southampton) and *The Government Inspector* (Salisbury Playhouse).

Ellie Verkerk - Musical Director

Ellie graduated from the Royal College of Music as a pianist, accompanist and orchestral musician, and has worked with a broad variety of musicians, singers and singer-songwriters, from London's West End to recording sessions, cabarets, weddings and beyond.

She was the assistant to the conductor and production assistant to the film director for *Celebrating John Lord* (Royal Albert Hall) and has worked as a keys player for *Jersey Boys* (Prince Edward Theatre). Her work as Musical Director includes *Beauty and the Beast*, *Oh What A Lovely War*, *Mother Courage*, *Dracula* and *The Great Gatsby* (Blackeyed Theatre), and *Cabaret in the Cellar Bar* (South Hill Park). Her work as Assistant Musical Director includes *Kerrigan-Lowdermilk LIVE* (St James Theatre), and *All I Want for Christmas...* (Julie Atherton, St James Theatre). Recording and session work includes *My Parade* (Stephanie Fearon), and singer-songwriters *Dear Pariah* and *Buswell*. She has appeared as a trumpet player in music videos, and conducted a symphony orchestra at the Shepherd's Bush Empire as part of the *Underground Orchestra Challenge* with Sean Buswell.

Ellie is a passionate supporter of young people, teaching and supporting those who aspire to work professionally in the creative arts industry, and works at the *Read Dance and Theatre College* (Reading, Berkshire). In addition to her musical work, Ellie is also a massage therapist, specialising in the treatment of musicians and performers, and works regularly with people with special needs.
www.EllieVerkerk.com.

Victoria Spearing – Set Designer

Graduating from Bretton Hall in Theatre Design and Technology in 2001, Victoria started work as a freelance set designer with South Hill Park Arts Centre, where she is now resident designer.

BLACKEYED THEATRE

This will be the twentieth design for Blackeyed Theatre, from *The Caretaker* to the highly acclaimed tours of *Not About Heroes*, *Dracula* and *Teechers*. Her design for *The Beekeeper* was nominated for the Best Set Design in the 2012 Off West End Theatre Awards.

She has designed over one hundred sets for a variety of companies, producing initial sketches and model boxes through to involvement in set building, painting and final dressing.

For South Hill Park she has designed the last twelve pantomimes, as well as a range of in-house productions, including *Summer Holiday*, *Brassed Off*, *Stepping Out*, *Blood Brothers*, *Calendar Girls*, *Oliver*, *Henry V*, *The Tempest*, *Billy Elliot* and *Oh What A Lovely War*. She also redesigned South Hill Park's Wilde Theatre Bar and Foyer to create a new performance space.

Her design work for other companies includes the world premier of *A Little History of the World* (Watermill Theatre), *The Dumb Waiter*, *Miss Julie*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Race* and *The Nativity that Goes Wrong* (Reading Rep), *Journey's End*, *Dancing at Lughnasa*, *The Madness of George III*, *Three Men in a Boat* and *Birdsong* (Original Theatre Company), *Lotty's War* (Giddy Ox), *Loserville* (Youth Music Theatre), *The History Boys* and *Danny the Champion of the World* (London Contemporary Theatre), as well as various Christmas shows for The Castle Wellingborough.

She lives in a small village with her husband and daughter and is currently using her design skills to transform her garden, that is of course when she is not busy reading a script, crafting a detailed model box or splattered with paint.

Yvonne Stone – Puppets and Puppetry

Yvonne studied Puppetry at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London having previously attended the Byam Shaw School of Art. She is now an independent puppet designer, director, maker and performer for theatre, television and film. Yvonne's Theatre credits include Terry Pratchett's 'Nation', 'Warhorse' and 'His Dark Materials' all for the National Theatre; 'Room on the Broom', 'The Gruffalo', 'The Snow Dragon' and 'Emily Brown' for Tall Stories Theatre Company; 'Rubbish' and 'Mojo' for Theatre Rites; 'The Lion King'; 'In the Night Garden – Live show'; and 'Macbeth' the Opera for Malmo Opera, Sweden. She also designed and built all the puppet elements for the National Theatre's Jubilee Tribute. Her credits for television include the CBeebies production 'Space Pirates', for which Yvonne created all the puppet elements. Yvonne played the part of DibDab in the BAFTA nominated 'DoodleDo'. She has also worked on 'Mr Bloom's Nursery' for CBeebies, 'Mongrels' for BBC3 and Matt Lucas' 'Pompidou'.

Yvonne has also held puppetry workshops at various locations including the National Theatre, Young Vic Theatre, and the Central School of Speech and Drama.

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Charlotte McClelland - Lighting Designer

Charlotte trained on an Arts Council bursary at Central School of Speech and Drama.

Previous work for Blackeyed Theatre includes *Art*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Oedipus*, *Oh What A Lovely War*, *The Trial*, *The Beekeeper*, *Dracula*, *Not About Heroes*, *Teechers* and *The Great Gatsby*.

Other recent lighting designs include *The Photophonic Experiment* for Contemporary Music Network, *Angels On High* for Guildford International Music Festival (vertical dance on Guildford Cathedral), *Carmen* and *The Marriage of Figaro* for Longborough Festival Opera, *Snow White* for South Hill Park Arts Centre, *The Baghdad Monologue*, *Lamentations* and *Chicos del 21* for Frances M Lynch/Electric Voice Theatre.

Anne Thomson - Costume Designer

Anne graduated from Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance with a BA(hons) in Costume Production in 2013 and has since worked as a costume maker, assistant and designer in theatre, TV and film. Upon graduating, she worked on the West End musical 'Wicked', after which she went on to work with English National Ballet, Royal Opera House, National Theatre and Angles the Costumiers. Anne's film and TV work includes design for several independent projects as well as a traineeship on the 'Spooks; the Greater Good' (2015), contributing to the costume workroom on season 5 of 'Game of Thrones' and most recently 'Taboo' for the BBC/FX.

Anne has also designed costumes for productions at South Hill Park Arts Centre since summer 2015, including *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Borrowers*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Oliver*.

Danielle Corbishley – Education Advisor

Danielle trained at Dartington and gained a PGCert in Physical Theatre with Jasmin Vardimon Company. She is a performer, director, lecturer and magician who develops and directs performances with Beautiful Creatures Theatre alongside her education and freelance theatre work.

Beautiful Creatures produces physical and visual theatre for audiences of all ages throughout the UK and curates a programme of outdoor arts at Caversham Festival, providing opportunities for young people to gain vocational experience.

Danielle is currently touring with Periplum's *451* as Company Stage Manager and Performer. Her previous education work for Blackeyed Theatre includes *Mother Courage And Her Children*, *Dracula*, *Not About Heroes*, *Teechers* and *The Great Gatsby*.

www.beautifulcreatures.org.uk

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Adrian McDougall - Producer

Adrian is the founder and Artistic Director of Blackeyed Theatre. He grew up in Berkshire, studying modern languages at Southampton University, going on to work in marketing and PR, before becoming a theatre producer in 2004.

Since Blackeyed Theatre's very first production, *Effie's Burning*, he has produced 19 national tours, including the world premiere of Steven Berkoff's *Oedipus* and a brand new stage adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. As a director, his credits include – for Blackeyed Theatre - the world premiere of *The Beekeeper* and national tours of *Oh What A Lovely War*, *Teechers* and *Alfie*, as well as *Brassed Off* and *House And Garden* (for South Hill Park). He has also worked as an actor, touring the UK with Oddsocks Productions, Premiere Stage Productions and the Phoenix Theatre Company.

Adrian is also a director of CentreStage Partnership, a leading provider of experiential learning and behavioural coaching to organisations from the public and private sectors (www.cstage.co.uk). He lives in Bracknell with his wife and two young children, supporting and participating in community theatre when he has time!

BLACKEYED THEATRE

Blackeyed Theatre

Blackeyed Theatre has been creating exciting, sustainable theatre throughout the UK since 2004. We have taken our work to over a hundred different theatres across England, Scotland and Wales, from 50 seat studios to 1000 seat opera houses.

Central to everything we do is our desire both to challenge and engage artists and audiences. As a company that receives minimal funding, we are proof that commercially successful theatre can still be innovative and can still surprise. We believe that only by balancing a desire to push artistic boundaries with an appreciation of what audiences have a desire to see do you create theatre that is truly sustainable, both commercially and artistically.

We bring together artists with a genuine passion for the work they produce, offering a theatrical experience that's both artistically excellent and affordable.

Our previous national tours *include* *The Great Gatsby* (F. Scott Fitzgerald, adapted by Stephen Sharkey), *Not About Heroes* (Stephen MacDonald), *Dracula* (Bram Stoker, adapted by John Ginman), *Teechers* (John Godber), *Mother Courage And Her Children* (Bertolt Brecht), *The Trial* (Steven Berkoff), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (Bertolt Brecht), *Alfie* (Bill Naughton), *The Cherry Orchard* (Anton Chekhov), *Oh What a Lovely War* (Joan Littlewood), the world premiere of *Oedipus* (Steven Berkoff) and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (Bertolt Brecht).

In 2011, Blackeyed Theatre launched Pulse, a new-writing competition. The winning script, *The Beekeeper* by Michael Ashton, enjoyed a three-week London Fringe run, receiving three OFFIE nominations, including Best New Play.

The company is resident at South Hill Park Arts Centre in Bracknell, where we continue to create accessible theatre that challenges expectations, furthering our reputation as one of the UK's leading touring theatre companies.

***“One of the most innovative, audacious companies
working in contemporary English theatre”***

The Stage

www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk

@blackeyedtheatr

BLAKEYED THEATRE

Images / Online Media / Contact Details

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020 7434 7204
alex@chloenelkinconsulting.com
info@chloenelkinconsulting.com

Marketing Materials

Download from:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/548wju5bscwm2ss/AAD6r4n_qs0r9A9euTtM87cma?dl=0

Includes brochure images, production and press photos, education pack, E-shot images, Twitter/Facebook headers, logos, layered artwork.

Video Trailer:

Available from late September

Interviews: Cast and creatives are available for interviews from Tuesday 30 August.

Social media links:

Twitter page

<https://twitter.com/Blackeyedtheatr>

#FrankensteinTour

Frankenstein Facebook group

TBC

Youtube playlist

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1310ED26A6AADB80>