

CAL PERFORMANCES AT HOME

Streaming Premiere – Thursday, October 29, 2020, 7pm

Manual Cinema's *Frankenstein*

Video produced exclusively for Cal Performances

A Manual Cinema Production
A Cal Performances Co-commission
Adapted from the novel by Mary Shelley

Concept by Drew Dir
Devised by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, and Julia Miller
Original Music and Sound Design by Ben Kauffman and Kyle Vegter
Storyboards by Drew Dir
Shadow Puppet Design by Drew Dir with Lizi Breit
Projections and Scenic Design by Rasean Davonte Johnson
Costume and Wig Design by Mieka van der Ploeg
Lighting Design by Claire Chrzan
3D Creature Puppet Design by Lizi Breit
Prop Design by Lara Musard

Shelby Glasgow, *stage manager, video mixing, and live sound effects*
Mike Usrey, *sound engineer*
Drew Dir, *lighting technician*

CAST

Puppeteers

Sarah Fornace (Victor Frankenstein, Mary Shelley)
Julia Miller (The Creature, Elizabeth Frankenstein)
Leah Casey (Percy Shelley, Vocals)
Sara Sawicki (Lord Byron)
Myra Su (Ensemble)

Musicians

Peter Ferry, *percussion*
Zachary Good, *clarinets and auxiliary percussion*
Deidre Huckabay, *flutes, auxiliary percussion, piano*
Lia Kohl, *cello, auxiliary percussion, vocals*

Note: following its premiere, Manual Cinema's Frankenstein will be available on demand through January 27, 2021.



Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein*—which, among its myriad other contributions to popular culture, single-handedly founded the modern genre of science fiction—casts a long shadow over the medium of cinema. The story of Victor Frankenstein and the unnamed Creature he brings to life has itself been perennially re-animated for movie audiences; from the first 1910 silent film adaptation produced by Thomas Edison's studio, to Boris Karloff's iconic visage in the 1933 Universal Studios classic, to more recent Hollywood reboots, riffs, and parodies. With each new era, *Frankenstein* manages to connect with our sympathy and revulsion at Frankenstein's "monster," our ambivalence about the progress of science and technology, and our anxieties about the mysterious threshold between life and death.

This fall, Cal Performances presents *Frankenstein*, a new adaptation by Manual Cinema, a theater company that seeks to create cinema on stage through an ingenious choreography of live music, object theater, and shadow puppetry using old-school overhead projectors. The work of Manual Cinema shares a special affinity with Mary Shelley's story about the reanimation of obsolete materials, and their adaptation aims to capture the breadth of *Frankenstein*'s legacy in

film: the novel's cinematic afterlife, so to speak. The artists are doing so by taking a cue from Mary Shelley herself, who gave her novel a "gothic" structure—the story is told in a series of narrative frames, like Russian nesting dolls, with each frame narrated by a different character (the centermost frame being an account by the Creature itself). In Manual Cinema's adaptation, each "frame" of the story will be told through a different cinematic genre or style, depending on which character's point-of-view is being presented. Like the Creature itself, the production becomes a pastiche of different visual idioms scavenged from a century of cinema.

Manual Cinema has also written an additional frame: the story of Mary Shelley herself, and how she came to write a novel of such enduring relevance. *Frankenstein* was originally conceived by Mary as a ghost story—a response to a friendly competition with the poets Percy Shelley and Lord Byron during an unusually stormy summer on Lake Geneva.

Manual Cinema's adaptation aims to re-animate its own *Frankenstein* against the backdrop of Mary Shelley's fascinating, tragic, and little-told biography.

—Drew Dir
lead deviser and co-artistic director

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Manual Cinema is an Emmy Award-winning performance collective, design studio, and film/video production company founded in 2010 by Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, Ben Kauffman, Julia Miller, and Kyle Vegter. The company combines hand-made shadow puppetry, cinematic techniques, and innovative sound and music to create immersive stories for stage and screen. Using vintage overhead projectors, multiple screens, puppets, actors, live feed cameras, multi-channel sound design, and a live music ensemble, Manual Cinema transforms the experience of attending the cinema and imbues it with liveness, ingenuity, and theatricality. The company received an Emmy Award in 2017 for *The Forger*, a video created for the *New York Times*,

and was named Chicago Artists of the Year in 2018 by the *Chicago Tribune*.

Manual Cinema has been presented by, worked in collaboration with, or brought its work to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the Under the Radar Festival (New York City); the Kimmel Center (Philadelphia); the O, Miami Poetry Festival; Arts Emerson (Boston); the Yale Repertory Theatre; the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; the Kennedy Center (Washington, DC); the Ace Hotel Theater (Los Angeles), La Monnaie-DeMunt (Brussels); the Noorderzon Festival (Netherlands); the Tehran International Puppet Festival (Iran); the King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Saudi Arabia), the Hakaway International Arts Festival (Cairo),



the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and elsewhere around the world. The company has also collaborated with the three-time Grammy Award-winning Eighth Blackbird and Hubbard Street Dance (Chicago); the *New York Times* and StoryCorps (New York City); Pop-Up Magazine (San Francisco); Nu Deco Ensemble (Miami); the *New York Times* best-selling author Reif Larsen; NPR's Invisibilia; *Topic* magazine; the Grammy Award-winning Esperanza Spalding; Erratica (London); and the Belgian Royal Opera (Brussels).

In December, Manual Cinema will premiere its new adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Each show will be performed live in Manual Cinema's Chicago studio in a socially distanced manner, and live-streamed to audiences at home, including here on *Cal Performances at Home* (Dec 17–19). In signature Manual Cinema style, hundreds of paper puppets, miniatures, silhouettes, and a live original musical score will combine in an imaginative re-invention of this cherished holiday classic. For more, visit www.manualcinema.com.

PUPPETEERS

Leah Casey (*Percy Shelley, vocals*) is a Chicago-based actress, writer, and dancer with an unnatural love for podcasts and sound design. Some of her previous credits include *Frankenstein* with Manual Cinema at Court Theatre, *Romeo and Juliet* with Teatro Vista, and *Storm* with Walkabout/Moonfool. When not onstage, she can be found behind the mic as an audiobook narrator, or working with the cast of *Project Stellar*, a science fiction podcast about a group of crazy kids who have close encounters of the awesome kind.

Sarah Fornace (*Mary Shelley, Victor Frankenstein, MC co-artistic director*) is a director, puppeteer, choreographer, and narrative designer based in Chicago, and a co-artistic director of Manual Cinema. Outside of Manual Cinema, Fornace has worked as a performer and/or choreographer with Redmoon Theatre, Look-

inglass Theatre Company, Court Theatre, Steppenwolf Garage, and Blair Thomas and Co. Most recently, she wrote the story mode for the video game *Rivals of Aether*. In 2017, Fornace directed and edited the first episode of the web series *The Doula is IN*. In 2016, she directed and devised an "animotion" production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* with Rokoko Studios for HamletScen at Kromborg Castle in Elsinore, Denmark.

Julia Miller (*The Creature, Elizabeth Frankenstein, MC co-artistic director*) is a director, puppeteer, and puppet designer. With Manual Cinema, she has directed *Mementos Mori* and *The End of TV* and created original roles in *Frankenstein* (The Creature/Elizabeth), *Ada/Ava* (Ada), *Lula del Ray* (Lula's Mother), *The Magic City* (Helen), and *Hansel und Gretel* (Hansel). In Chicago, she has worked as a performer and puppeteer with Redmoon Theatre and Blair Thomas and Co. Miller spent several years training in devised theater, clown, and mask with Double Edge Theatre and Carlos García Estevez, as well as at the Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Italy. She is a co-producer and director of several episodes of the new web series *The Doula is IN*.

Sara Sawick (*Lord Byron*) is a Chicago based theater artist. With Manual Cinema, she most recently appeared in the original cast of *Frankenstein* (Lord Byron). She tours internationally with MC in *Lula del Ray* (Lula's Mother), *Mementos Mori* (Lady), and *Ada/Ava* (puppeteer). Sara works nationally with the Center for Performance and Civic Practice as the partnerships and communications manager. She is also an artistic associate with Sojourn Theatre, most recently appearing in the Midwest regional premiere of *How to End Poverty* at Cleveland Public Theatre, presented in partnership with United Way of Greater Cleveland. Past projects include work with NetherRealm Studios (cinematic performance capture); Actors Gymnasium (Youth Circus co-director and writer); and one step at a time like this, in collaboration with Chicago Shakespeare Theater (performer).



Myra Su (*puppeteer*) is a storyteller, puppeteer, and puppet maker. Her primary medium is shadow puppetry but her work also includes experiments with crankies, paper craft, bunraku, video, and taxidermy. Su has been a featured artist at the Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival, the Baltimore Crankie Festival, and the National Puppet Slam in Atlanta. Upcoming projects include a NPN/VAN-funded music-puppetry collaboration with renowned musician/filmmaker Tatsuo Aoki, using miniatures, shadows, and live video. In addition to her independent work, Su has worked with Manual Cinema since 2013 as a puppet builder and touring puppeteer. Some of her show credits include: *Frankenstein*, *Lula del Ray*, and *Ada/Ava*. For her full portfolio, please visit myrasu.com.

MUSICIANS

Peter Ferry (*percussion*), praised as an “ingenious percussionist” (*Chicago Sun-Times*) and “an artist of vision” (*Democrat and Chronicle*), is a young American percussion soloist and artistic collaborator. Since his concerto debut at age 18, Ferry has championed the works of living composers including Michael Daugherty, who has praised Ferry as “one of the most promising and committed soloists of his generation.” A TEDx speaker, Ferry has collaborated with choreographer Nick Pupillo at Chicago’s Harris Theater and abroad at the European Museum of Modern Glass, where he was nominated for the Coburg Prize. An alumnus of the Eastman School of Music, Ferry graduated with the first-ever John Beck Percussion Scholarship, an Arts Leadership Program certificate, and the prestigious Performer’s Certificate recognizing outstanding performing ability.

Zachary Good (*clarinets*) is an instrumentalist (clarinets and recorders) and performer from Pittsburgh. Now based in Chicago, he is a freelance musician, educator, and founding member of the performance group Mocrep. Along with Manual Cinema, Good has enjoyed per-

forming with the International Contemporary Ensemble, Eighth Blackbird, Third Coast Percussion, Ensemble Dal Niente, Lyric Opera Unlimited, the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and the improv trio ZRL. He is also a band director at the Chicago Waldorf School. Good is a graduate of Oberlin and DePaul.

Deidre Huckabay (*flute, piano*) is a Chicago-based performer, writer, photographer, and event producer. She is co-owner of the experimental cassette tape label Parlour Tapes+ and a regular contributor to *Cacophony Magazine*. Huckabay is a member of the Chicago-based performance group Mocrep, co-curator of the WE Series at Elastic Arts, and founder of Spiderf*rt Press. She is also a 2017 3Arts Make a Wave grantee and a Sponsored Artist at High Concept Labs. In 2017, Huckabay received a full year studio and rehearsal residency with the Eighth Blackbird Chicago Artists Workshop.

Lia Kohl (*cello*) is a cellist and multidisciplinary artist based in Chicago, creating and performing embodied music and multimedia performance that incorporates sound, video, movement, theater, and sculptural objects. Kohl is a curator and ensemble member with the acclaimed performance ensemble Mocrep, with whom she has toured nationally and internationally. She has presented work and performed at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and held residencies at Mana Contemporary Chicago, High Concept, DFBRL8R Performance Art Gallery, and Stanford University. As an improviser, Kohl performs regularly around Chicago and with ZRL, her clarinet/percussion/cello trio. She also plays with Chicago bands Whitney, OHMME, and Circuit des Yeux and tours regularly with Manual Cinema.

STAFF & CREATIVE TEAM

Lizi Breit (*puppet designer, MC associate designer*) is a Chicago-based artist working primarily in illustration, animation, sculpture,



and performance. She has been working with Manual Cinema since 2011 and is currently serving as associate designer. Breit is an artistic associate with the Neo-Futurists and a former member of Blair Thomas & Co. Her internet self lives at www.lizibreit.com.

Claire Chrzan (*lighting designer*) is excited to collaborate with Manual Cinema again after previously designing *No Blue Memories: The Life of Gwendolyn Brooks* and *The End of TV*. Other credits include *Evening at the Talk House*, *The Mutilated*, and *The Room* (A Red Orchid); *The? Unicorn? Hour?*, *Saturn Returns* (The Neo-Futurists); *The Distance, We're Gonna Die* (Haven Theatre); *Caught* (Sideshow Theatre Company); *After Miss Julie*, *The Night Season* (Strawdog Theatre Company); *Peerless* (First Floor Theater); *Pinocchio* (Neverbird at Chicago Children's Theatre); *Love and Human Remains*, *Good Person of Szechwan* (Cor Theatre); *The Terrible* (The New Colony); *The Guardians*, *Uncle Bob* (Mary-Arrchie); *The Hero's Journey*, *Best Beloved: The Just So Stories*, *The Pied Piper* (Forks and Hope Ensemble). Chrzan also works as a production stage manager for companies including Hubbard Street's HS2, the Joffrey Ballet's Joffrey Academy, and Alonzo King LINES Ballet. Clairechrzandesigns.com.

Drew Dir (*director, puppet designer, MC co-artistic director*) is a writer, director, and puppet designer. Previously, he served as Resident Dramaturg of Court Theatre and as a lecturer in theater and performance studies at the University of Chicago. Dir holds a master's degree in text and performance studies from King's College London and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

Shelby Glasgow (*live sound effects and video, stage manager, MC company manager*) joined Manual Cinema in September 2016 as the touring stage manager and company manager. She has since toured within the United States and internationally with *Ada/Ava*, *Lula del Ray*, *Mementos Mori*, *The End of TV*, and Manual Cinema's newest full-length show, *Frankenstein*.

Shelby graduated from the University of Central Florida with a BFA in stage management and has stage managed regionally all over the country. Thank you to Manual Cinema for these amazing opportunities!

Rasean Davonte Johnson (*projections and scenic design*) is delighted to be working again with Manual Cinema, following his previous involvement with *Lula del Ray* and *Fjords*. A Chicago-based video artist and theatrical designer, he has also worked with Steppenwolf Theatre, The Hypocrites, Yale Repertory Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, McCarter Theatre Center, Geva Theatre Center, Berkshire Theatre Group, Alliance Theatre, the Ningbo Song and Dance Company, and B-Floor Theatre. Johnson received his MFA degree from the Yale School of Drama. raseandavontejohnson.com.

Ben Kauffman (*composer, sound designer, MC co-artistic director*) is a composer, director, and interactive media artist, and a co-artistic director of Manual Cinema. His film and interactive work has been shown at the Jay Pritzker Pavilion and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum in Chicago, and at CUNY's Baruch College in New York City. Kauffman has lectured and given workshops at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York University, and the Parsons School of Design/The New School. His past composer/sound designer credits with Manual Cinema include *Ada/Ava*, *The End of TV*, and the *New York Times* documentary *The Forger*. Kauffman holds a master's degree from New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP).

Lara Musard (*prop designer*) serves as the prop manager at Court Theatre in Chicago, where Manual Cinema's *Frankenstein* first premiered in October of 2018. For this project, she worked with Drew Dir to design and create the majority of the two- and three-dimensional pieces seen in the Victor Frankenstein sections of the storytelling. (Having propped nearly 60 shows at Court Theatre over a 12-year period, Musard found *Frankenstein* to be, by far, the most

unique.) She is grateful for the experience of working in this medium and proud to have been part of the team.

Mike Usrey (*sound engineer, MC tech director*). “That may be the most important thing to understand about humans. It is the unknown that defines our existence. We are constantly searching, not just for answers to our questions, but for new questions. We are explorers. We explore our lives day by day, and we explore the galaxy trying to expand the boundaries of our knowledge. And that is why I am here: not to conquer you with weapons or ideas, but to co-exist and learn” (Benjamin Lafayette Sisko).

Mieka van der Ploeg (*costume designer*) has designed costumes for a host of Chicago theaters that includes Lookingglass Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, The Hypocrites, Chicago Children’s Theatre, About Face Theatre, the House Theatre, Next Theatre, Griffin Theatre, the Building Stage, Albany Park Theater Project, Dog and Pony Theatre, and Manual Cinema. She is proud to be an artistic associate at About Face Theatre. Van der Ploeg has received Jeff Award nominations for

Golden Boy (Griffin Theater) and *Mr. Burns* (co-designed with Mara Blumenfeld and Theater Wit).

Kyle Vegter (*composer, sound designer, MC co-artistic director*) is a composer, producer, and sound designer, and the managing artistic director of Manual Cinema. As a composer of concert music, he has been commissioned by groups including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s MusicNOW series, the Pacific Northwest Ballet, and Tiguer. Vegter’s music and sound design for theater and film has been seen worldwide and commissioned by the *New York Times*, NPR’s Invisibilia, Topic (First Look Media), the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, StoryCorps, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Poetry Foundation, Hubbard Street Dance, the O, Miami Poetry Festival, and others. His past composer/sound designer credits with Manual Cinema include *Lula del Ray*, *Ada/Ava*, *Fjords*, *Mementos Mori*, *The End of TV*, and various other performance and video projects. Vegter has been an artist-in-residence at High Concept Laboratories and co-founded Chicago’s only contemporary classical music cassette label, Parlour Tapes+.

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