



The TNT theatre Britain presents:

# FRANKENSTEIN

## THE MONSTER AND THE MYTH

By Paul Stebbings & Phil Smith

Inspired by the Mary Shelley novel  
and the Hollywood movies

Directed by Paul Stebbings  
Original music by Paul Flush  
Produced by Grantly Marshall  
and the ADG Europe

THE AMERICAN DRAMA GROUP EUROPE presents TNT  
THEATRE BRITAIN in

# FRANKENSTEIN

## The Monster And The Myth!

By Paul Stebbings & Phil Smith, inspired by Mary Shelley's novel and the Hollywood movies.

**PAUL STEBBINGS** is Artistic Director of TNT theatre Britain and the American Drama Group Europe, which combine to make "the world's most popular touring theatre company" (China National TV) – giving more performances in more countries in a single year than any other theatre company. Paul received a first class degree from Bristol University drama department. He trained in the Grotowski physical theatre method in Britain and Poland and founded TNT in 1980. In 1993 he joined forces with producer Grantly Marshall and the American Drama Group Europe. He is an actor and playwright as well as a director and has also worked extensively in music theatre. He is a regular director at China's best theatre: The Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre and for the noted Latin American company Teatro Espressivo de Costa Rica. He has directed professionally in Russian, German, Italian and Greek and is in continuous production of plays in Mandarin and Spanish. His current projects include: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF MARTIN LUTHER KING (which he also co- wrote), HAMLET and THE MERCHANT OF VENICE by Shakespeare, THE WAVE by Todd Strasser, new versions of PETER PAN and FRANKENSTEIN and Paul's play about the painter Goya (in Spanish). Paul received an MBE at Buckingham Palace last February for his contribution to British culture.

**PHIL SMITH** was born in Coventry, England and studied Drama at Bristol University. He is a co-founder of TNT THEATRE with Paul Stebbings and their work has been performed from New York to Tokyo, from village halls to opera houses. He has written or co-written over 100 professionally produced plays and libretti. Since 1993 TNT have collaborated on numerous productions with the AMERICAN DRAMA GROUP EUROPE, Phil working on these as co- writer and/or dramaturg, including FAHRENHEIT 451 and THE TAMING OF THE SHREW. Phil Smith is the author of: MYTHOGEOGRAPHY: A GUIDE TO WALKING SIDEWAYS (an artistic form of exploring familiar places) see: [www.mis-guide.com](http://www.mis-guide.com) and [www.mythogeography.com](http://www.mythogeography.com).

- **T**here are very few authentic modern myths, Frankenstein is one of those few. The Monster disturbs us in a way that Dracula merely frightens. Frankenstein's monster is clearly a prototype of a very real terror: **the fear of a new more powerful life form created by our own hands**. That this monster has changed shape and now may lurk within not just the animal but the insect and the vegetable is all the more disturbing. Gene manipulation, stem cell research and cloning are part of our everyday lives. The Monster is among us and it is made all the more frightening by those who do not see it as a monster.
- **T**his dilemma is at the heart of the myth and our play. Mary Shelley led the way when she had Frankenstein recoil from his own creation as soon as it was made and deny him his bride. The Hollywood movies did the same. The Frankenstein myth is not about a mad scientist above morality who is out of control. Rather, **the myth is about a scientist who instantly sees his folly but is led ever onward by forces he has unleashed**. We have tried to follow and develop this theme.

→ Not only Victor but his fiancée' Elizabeth explore the contradictions and conflicts that scientific progress forces upon us. **Should artificial life be created?** Should the dead or dying be revived? Once the Monster is created does he deserve a bride? Is killing permitted if it saves life? (Something that relates to embryo research as well as murder!). At the same time the play and theme are not sterile or academic, there is a great thrill in creating life and remaking the world. The atom is split, DNA deciphered, stem cells cultivated – the genie is out of the bottle and it is thrilling magic.

- **W**hy then so much comedy? (At least until the Monster appears). Frankenstein is a story of human folly and we are ripe for satire. Folly is at the root of most serious comedy. The Hollywood movies admit this and merrily intertwine comedy and melodrama to make such memorable horror. Mary Shelley employs melodrama in her Gothic novel. On stage melodrama is comic. The Gothic hovers close to the grotesque. We try to avoid parody (this has been done too well in Mel Brooks' YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN). Our central characters never make jokes, **the comedy arises from the situation**. In terms of visual and physical style we have looked to the **Expressionist films** that provided the model for James Whale's original movies and were in turn inspired by the European Gothic tradition in which Shelly writes. THE CABINET OF DR CALIGARI, METROPOLIS and even Charlie Chaplin's CITY LIGHTS offer us a style that suits the myth. It is extreme, but then the tale is extreme. We live in extreme times, science offers us salvation or annihilation. Is the idea of the first head transplant a joke or a horror story? The answer may be that it is both.

*We hope our tale will amuse and chill, and above all raise questions to which we ourselves have no easy answer.*

# MARY SHELLEY

## Biography



Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851), English Romantic novelist, biographer and editor, best known as the writer of *Frankenstein* (1818). Mary Shelley was 21 when the book was published.

Mary Shelley was born on August 30, 1797, in London. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who died in childbirth, was one of the first feminists. Her father was the writer and political journalist William Godwin.

In her childhood Mary Shelley was left to educate herself amongst her father's intellectual circle. She published her first poem at the age of ten. At the age of 16 she ran away to France and Switzerland with the poet Percy Shelley. They married in 1816 after Shelley's first wife had committed suicide by drowning. Their first child, a daughter, died in Venice, Italy, a few years later. In the *History Of Six Weeks' Tour* (1817) the Shelleys jointly recorded their life. Thereafter they returned to England and Mary gave birth to a son, William.

In 1818 the Shelleys left England for Italy, where they remained until Shelley's death - he drowned in 1822 in the Bay of Spezia near Livorno. In 1819 Mary suffered a nervous breakdown after the death of William - she had also lost a daughter the previous year. In 1822 she had a dangerous miscarriage. Of their children only one, Percy Florence, survived infancy. In 1823 she returned with her son to England, determined not to re-marry. She devoted herself to his welfare and education and continued her career as a professional writer.

None of Shelley's works published later matched the power of her first legendary novel. Her later works include *Lodore* (1835) and *Faulkner* (1837), both romantic potboilers, and the unfinished *Mathilde* (1819, published 1959), which draws on her relations with Godwin and Shelley. *Valperga* (1823) is a romance set in the 14th-century, and *The Last Man* (1826) depicts the end of human civilization, set in the 21st century.

Mary Shelley also wrote numerous short stories for popular periodicals, particularly *The Keepsake*, produced several volumes of *Lives for Lardner's Cabinet Cyclopaedia*, and the first authoritative edition of Shelley's poems (1839, 4 vols.). Her well-received travelogue *Rambles In Germany And Italy* appeared in 1844.

Mary Shelley died in London on February 1, 1851, probably of a brain tumor.

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## FRANKENSTEIN AND HOLLYWOOD

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In 1931, **Universal Pictures** released what is now often praised as the definitive horror film: *Frankenstein*. The image of **Boris Karloff** in the flat-head monster mask with bolts in his neck and in undersized clothes has become part of popular culture; Boris Karloff's iconic impersonation of the Monster has become synonymous with the word "**Frankenstein**".



But before filming began on 24 August 1931 there was a long period of pre- production. At the end of the 1920s Universal Pictures, which was founded in 1912 by Carl Laemmle Sr, a Jewish German immigrant, was still a small studio. Nevertheless Universal had achieved a reputation as the creator of the horror film genre. Low-budget productions like *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Dracula* had established it as the leading studio in the field and had made actors like Bela Lugosi famous. In 1930 Universal Studios began to develop a new horror film as a follow-up to the successful "*Dracula*". The studio had acquired the rights to Webbing's theatre adaptation "*Frankenstein: An Adventure in the Macabre*", which had become a huge success in London in the late 1920s.

Bela Lugosi, star of Universal's *Dracula*, was cast as the Monster, but later turned down the role because he did not want to play a character that did not speak. The renowned British director James Whale was hired to make the film. Whale chose 44-year old Boris Karloff as the Monster and together with make-up specialist Jack Pierce they created the most influential horror image of all times. Karloff was a stage name for the British actor, William Pratt.

The film was a huge success, costing only \$270,000 to make it grossed over \$12,000,000. The success of *FRANKENSTEIN* prompted Universal Studios to make **THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN**. The director was once again Whale who this time insisted on more artistic control. The result is perhaps a more satisfying movie, certainly one of more moral complexity and one that draws on Mary Shelley's original novel, which the first film almost ignores. Together the two films achieved something that few popular movies have ever managed: they created a modern myth familiar throughout the globe and one that resonates to this very day.



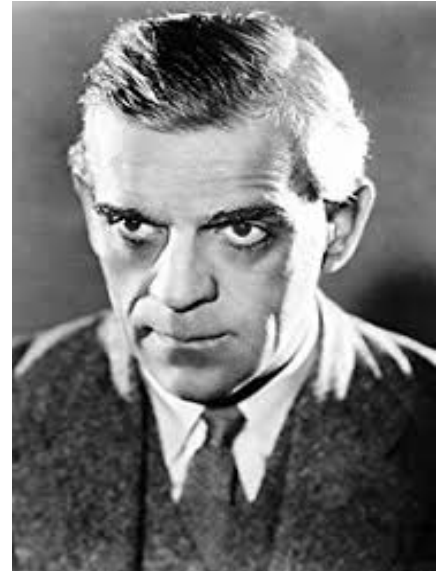
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# BORIS KARLOFF (1887 – 1969)

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**Birth Name:** William Henry Pratt **Born:** November 23, 1887, Dulwich, England **Died:** 1969

The youngest of the eight children of a civil servant in the British foreign service, he was intended for a diplomatic career but in 1909 emigrated to Canada, where he found employment as a farmhand. Attracted to the stage, he joined touring companies and played supporting parts in plays all over Canada and the US. In 1916, during a brief stay in Los Angeles, he made his screen debut as an extra in *The Dumb Girl of Portici*. He began appearing regularly in films, in extra and bit parts. Unable to support himself as an actor, he alternated as a truck driver until the mid-20s, when his screen roles became more substantial. He was typically cast as a stock villain and failed to gain much recognition through the rest of the silent era, although he appeared in no less than 40 silent films.



Despite a pronounced lisp, Karloff's stage-trained voice became an asset during the transition to sound. He scored his first success in *The Criminal Code* (1931), in which he repeated a previous stage role. But the real turning point in his career came later that year, when he was cast by James Whale in the role of the Monster in *Frankenstein*. Even the heavy makeup applied to Karloff's face could not hide the nuances of his performance. The film was a great success and assured Karloff a permanent niche in the horror film genre.



In contrast, Karloff was known as a mild-mannered, amiable gentleman who performed many acts of charity for needy children. Throughout his busy screen career (some 140 films in all) Karloff continued to return to the stage. He scored a great success in 1941 as Jonathan Brewster in the Broadway production of *Arsenic and Old Lace* and another in 1950 as Captain Hook in *Peter Pan*. He gave one of his best performances in one of his last screen roles, virtually playing himself, as an aging star of horror movies, in Peter Bogdanovich's *Targets* (1968).