

## Review

# Frankenstein

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### A myth bending feast

It says much that the myth of Frankenstein's monster so successfully evokes primal fears about scientific advances into the unknown, that even today it is cited in key debates about genetic modification. In this tremendous, insane reworking of that night when Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, and Mary Shelley competed to tell the best ghost story, the theatre company Forkbeard Fantasy allows that sense of nightmare scientific exploration to mix with absurd film references, documentary send-ups, and endearingly grotesque puppetry.

Those who have spent the last 28 years following the company's experiments with film projection, animated sets and cartoon-style buffoonery, will recognise that Frankenstein's monster is the perfect subject for Forkbeard's enlightened lunacy. Creators Tim and Chris Britton have grabbed greedily from several traditions of absurdity, so that Beckett, Lewis Carroll, and the brilliantly eccentric Polish artist Tadeusz Kantor exert their influence as much as any monster that has loomed out of the Hammer Horror stable.

The reworked plot centres on David G Scrivener, Frankenstein scholar, and obnoxious documentary maker, who is dragged into the Frankenstein story after being visited by a devilish figure whose two-pronged hairstyle makes it look as if he has asked for a number 666 from his hairdresser. On a revolving set, which could arguably come from the Frankenstein school of architecture – with its wonkily assembled two storey's, and giant mechanised contraption on top – Scrivener starts to discuss the monster's influence.

The next two hours maniacally combine theatre and film as Scrivener visits hell – where he finds Mary Shelley, Mary herself debates with her reflection in the mirror about how to get rid of Scrivener, and the search is conducted for Frankenstein's monster's mate. You fear for the Britton brothers' sanity, but this is a glorious, mechanised, image-juggling, myth-bending, feast for the eyes and brain that cleverly celebrates that poor mortuary-born monster.

