

MARY: The Birth of Frankenstein by Jess Sayer

Show Summary

Pre-show Demonstration: Tue 2 Sept 6:30pm

Relaxed Performance: Tue 2 Sept 7:00pm

This production contains intense content that may be distressing:

- Multiple on-stage deaths including strangulation, neck-breaking, and murder
- Scenes of forced medical treatment and restraint of vulnerable person (Marta)
- Themes connecting to historical medical experimentation on disabled people
- Discussion of pregnancy loss and infant death
- Elder abuse in the treatment of Marta
- Drug use and sexual content including unwanted sexual advances
- Mental health crises and psychological breakdowns
- Supernatural themes including reanimation from death
- May be triggering for those with a history of psychosis

Production Elements:

- loud thunder effects (over 30 throughout) and sudden sound effects designed to startle
- Intense lighting with over 20 bright strobe lightning flashes, complete blackouts, and laser effects
- The Monster runs through the theatre audience during Act Two
- Continuous haze/smoke effects and scent effects (oak and moss)
- Physical violence with trained stage combat
- Descending set pieces and tilting stage floor

Support Available: If any themes are triggering, contact 1737 or visit <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/helplines>. Quiet breakout spaces available during performance.

A note on Spoilers:

This document includes spoilers. If you don't want to know details about the show, don't read any further.



Five historical figures gather at Byron's villa during the cursed year without summer. The mute housekeeper Marta works silently as storms rage outside.

Production note: Thunder effects throughout with over 30 loud cracks ranging from sudden sharp sounds to extended 10-second rumbles. The opening thunder is particularly startling.



Mary Shelley arrives with her husband Percy and stepsister Claire to join the infamous Lord Byron and his companion Dr. Polidori. Complex relationships quickly emerge—Claire desperate for Byron's attention, Percy seeking his approval, Mary wary but intellectually engaged.




Byron proposes they take experimental drugs together and write ghost stories. Under the influence, inhibitions drop and cruel truths emerge. Byron propositions Mary, invoking her mother's feminist ideals. When Mary rejects him, demanding intellectual equality not sexual conquest, betrayals multiply.

Production note: Strobe sequences accompany the drug-taking scenes with rapid colour changes and heavy bass music.



Claire confesses she's pregnant with Byron's child. He brutally rejects her. Percy reveals his financial desperation to Byron. Mary discovers everyone plotting behind her back.





Betrayed by all, Mary tells her Frankenstein story—a scientist who creates life from corpses only to abandon his creation in horror. The men dismiss it as unrealistic, but Mary defends it with scientific theories about galvanism and reanimation.



Excited by the possibility of reanimating the dead, the group decides to test Mary's theory. They target Marta as their victim. Despite Mary's desperate attempts to stop them, Claire murders Marta with a blow to the head.

Production note: Red lighting floods the stage. Mary's shadow transforms into a monstrous shape that consumes the stage as Act One ends.



Interval

You can take a break, use the toilet, and get a drink or snack from the bar, or remain in your seat. You can use the breakout space to relax away from crowds. The break will last about 20 minutes.

Production note: Scent effects change from oak in Act One to moss during interval and Act Two.



ACT TWO

Content warning: The second half focuses heavily on violence, murder, and psychological breakdown.

Marta's body is strapped to an electrical apparatus. As lightning approaches, the group positions themselves to channel it. Mary hesitates but finally activates the mechanism. Lightning strikes, surging through Marta before everything goes black.

Production note: Extremely bright laser effects from electrical equipment fill the entire theatre with extended strobe sequences.



In darkness, the Creature awakens. Claire screams that something touched her. When candles are lit, Marta's body has vanished. The men celebrate their success while Claire becomes hysterical.



Mary and Claire have their most vicious argument yet. Claire reveals she could take Percy whenever she wants. Mary screams she wishes Claire were dead. At that moment, the Creature charges from shadows, slamming Claire around the house, killing her.



The Monster runs through the theatre audience suddenly, appearing in the stalls while shouting—designed to be frightening.



One by one, the Creature kills the men. Polidori has his neck snapped. Byron is strangled as Mary literally eclipses his fallen form. Percy dies while Mary holds him, crying as she explains the "storm" she's always carried inside.



The stage fully tilts. The four corpses slide together around Mary, forming a larger creature-shape. Lightning strikes the pile of bodies, causing them to twitch with "imperfect animation."

Production note: Physical effects include the bookshelf falling forward with books spilling, lighting fixtures descending, and the entire stage floor tilting upward.



Mary faces the audience, drenched in blood, smiling as the writhing mass behind her resembles her shadow. She declares: "How wonderfully frightful."

At the end of the play, the audience will clap and cheer.

