



Frankenstein is a coup  
for Geordie Theatre

## Description

# An innovative version of the horror classic comes to the Segal Centre

By **Byron Toben**

October 27, 2022

**Geordie Theatre**, established some 40 years ago by **Elsa Bolam**, has an enviable history through a succession of Artistic Directors. Originally focused on children's theatre, it has long become a theatre for all ages.

In recent years, I have particularly enjoyed its versions of classics such as **Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 days*** and Frank Capra's ***It's A Wonderful Life***. Now, under Executive Director **Jimmy Blais**, it has managed to stage an innovative adaptation of **Mary Shelley's classic story *Frankenstein***.



This stage script was written by a trifecta of Canadian

playwrights/actors with creds in reworking famous stories: **Rick Miller** (*MacHomer*), **Paul Van Dyck** (*Paradise Lost*) and **Craig Francis** (who directed).

Hard to believe that 21-year-old **Mary Godwin**, then married (sort of) to English poet **Percy Bysshe Shelley**, would pen the first science fiction novel predating Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Edgar Allen Poe. But it all happened in Switzerland on a rainy summer week near Geneva where the two were touring Europe with **Lord Byron** and his physician. While housebound, Byron urged each to write a ghost story prompting Mary to pen the tale of **Dr. Victor Frankenstein** the modern Prometheus, a scientist who assembled body parts from recent cadavers to stitch together and animate the assembled “person” with a spark of electricity.

The creation, Frankenstein’s Monster, later generated many stage and film adaptations, ranging from 1931 (with **Boris Karloff**) to 1994 (with **Robert De Niro**).

Although the monster, in wandering, sought love and understanding, he met only fear and rejection because of his appearance.

In this Geordie version, three actors play some nine roles... Lots of fast changes for Eloi Archambaudoin, Rosie Callaghan and Arun Varma... Well scripted and well executed.

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While watching it, I kept thinking of the even more fantastic life

of Mary Shelley's mother, **Mary Wollstonecraft**, who died at 38, eleven days after giving birth to her daughter. She had taught herself French and German, met Thomas Paine and, inspired by his works, wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, lived in France during the Terror and married, after two failed love affairs, English anarchist philosopher William Godwin. Her *Vindication*, always in print, has new relevance since the "Me Too" awakening.

Both Marys wrote other novels and works besides their most famous ones, which raises for some, myself included, the age-old question of nature vs. nurture. Can talent be inherited even though the two never met during formative years? Years ago, I read an essay asking the question, "Would a Newton, born into a den of thieves, have devised a new and ingenious picklock?" I can't re-locate the author, but the question still haunts me.

***Frankenstein: A Living Comic Book* continues at the Segal Centre until October 30.**

Perfect for Halloween!

[segalcentre.org](http://segalcentre.org)

Images: Andrée Lanthier

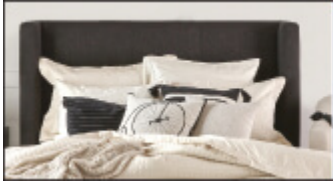
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**Byron Toben**, a past president of *The Montreal Press Club*, has been *WestmountMag.ca*'s theatre reviewer since July 2015. Previously, he wrote for since terminated web sites *Rover Arts* and *Charlebois Post*, print weekly *The Downtowner* and print monthly *The Senior Times*. He also is an expert consultant on U.S. work permits for



Canadians.

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