



music dance theater

# Cal Performances

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY



**Manual Cinema's**  
***Frankenstein***



Sunday, October 31, 2020, 3pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Manual Cinema's *Frankenstein*

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

Kyle Vegter, *stage manager, video mixing, and live sound effects*  
Mike Usrey, *sound engineer*  
David Goodman-Edberg, *lighting technician*

### CAST

#### *Puppeteers*

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

#### *Musicians*

Peter Ferry, *percussion*  
Jason Gresl, *clarinets and auxiliary percussion*  
Robin Mieksin, *flutes, auxiliary percussion, piano*  
Lia Kohl, *cello, auxiliary percussion, vocals*

*This performance will last approximately 70 minutes  
and be performed without an intermission.*



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.

Last fall and due to COVID-19, *Cal Performances at Home* presented a special video version of the Manual Cinema production that you will see today in the company's first live performance since the pandemic began in March 2020. Through its productions, this award-winning and highly praised company 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 created 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 handmade 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 Rep-



ertory 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 2021, Manual Cinema premiered its new adaptation of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Each show was performed live in the company's Chicago studio in a socially distanced manner, and live-streamed to audiences at home, including on *Cal Performances at Home* (Dec 17–19, 2021). In signature Manual Cinema style, hundreds of paper puppets, miniatures, silhouettes, and a live original musical score combined in an imaginative re-invention of this cherished holiday classic.

For more, visit [www.manualcinema.com](http://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, Lookingglass 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*.

**Maren Celest** (*Lord Byron*) is a multi-disciplinary storyteller based in Chicago; her video work has been premiered on NPR music, her photography and experimental portraiture has appeared in publications worldwide, and her large-format analogue work has appeared as album artwork for Ohmme, Ben LaMar Gay, and Twin Talk. Celest published a book in tandem with a recording called *I Saw the Sun* (Candor Arts) that was accepted into a permanent collection at Yale University. The work compiles personal experiences over five years documented through 35mm film, writing,

and lyrics gleaned from life on the road with Manual Cinema while touring through eight countries.

**Myra Su** (*puppeteer*) is a storyteller, puppeteer, and puppet maker. Her primary medium is shadow puppetry but her work also includes experimentations 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 Tatsu Aoki, using miniatures, shadows, and live video. Along with her independent projects, Su has worked with Manual Cinema since 2013 as a puppet builder and touring puppeteer. Some of her credits include *Frankenstein*, *Lula del Ray*, and *Ada/Ava*. For her full portfolio, please visit [myrasu.com](http://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.

**Jason Gresl** (*clarinets*). Having played bass clarinet while hanging upside-down in front of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in an

impromptu performance of Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet just after almost drowning in the Panama Canal, woodwind specialist Jason Gresl now spends his time diving from one artistic adventure into another—on one hand, exploring music with his multidisciplinary concert series, The Muses’ Workshop; his duo, Claricello; and through new music commissions, on the other, playing in the pit for musicals, most recently *Wicked*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *The Book of Mormon*, and *In the Heights*. Last spring, he was part of a Barrymore-nominated run of Paula Vogel’s *Indecent in Philadelphia* (later reprising the role in Vermont). Gresl teaches at Andrews University and Lake Michigan College. In his spare time, he attempts to learn feats of wonder with playing cards and enjoys cooking Thai and Indian cuisines.

**Robin Meiksins** (*flute*) is a freelance contemporary flutist focused on collaborations with living composers. Chicago-based, she uses the Internet and online media to support and create her collaborations. In 2017, Meiksins completed her first year-long collaborative project, *365 Days of Flute*. Each day featured a different work; each video was recorded and posted on the same day. In 2018, she launched the *52 Weeks of Flute* Project. Each week featured a different living composer workshoping a submitting work, culminating in a performance on YouTube. Meiksins has premiered over 100 works and has performed at SPLICE Institute, the SEAMUS national conference, and Oh My Ears New Music Festival (2018), and she was a guest artist at University of Illinois for their first annual “24-Hour Compose-a-thon.” Meiksins holds a master’s degree from Indiana University’s Jacobs School of Music, where she studied with Kate Lukas and Thomas Robertello.

**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 Mocrepe, 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](http://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*, and *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](http://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.

**David Goodman-Edberg** (*lighting designer*) is a Chicago based lighting designer. Working primarily in the worlds of dance and theater, he has lit works with such companies as Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, Chicago Tap Theatre, Eisenhower Dance Detroit, Thodos Dance Chicago, Visceral Dance Chicago, Water Street Dance Milwaukee, Adventure Stage Chicago, Akvavit Theatre, Cabinet of Curiosity, Chicago Fringe Opera, Factory Theater, First Floor Theater, The Gift Theatre, The New Colony, Organic Theatre, Red Tape Theater, The Syndicate, Trap Door Theatre, and Wildclaw Theatre. David has also toured with several dance and theater companies as a lighting director and/or production stage manager and worked as an assistant lighting designer with the architectural lighting firm Point of Light. [Daviddesignsthings.com](http://Daviddesignsthings.com).

**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](http://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 Tigue. 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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Jeremy Geffen

Welcome and Happy Halloween! Words cannot express my pleasure in welcoming you to this afternoon's presentation by the truly astounding **Manual Cinema**, Chicago's Emmy Award-winning performance collective, in the company's brilliant production of *Frankenstein*. You may have been among those who enjoyed the special video version of this production that aired as part of last fall's *Cal Performances at Home* streaming season. That was a terrific and memorable program, but let me assure you, there is nothing that matches the power of watching these astonishing artists as they create and perform their work *live*, right before your eyes. I couldn't be happier that you could join us for what promises to be a memorable performance; it's wonderful to be together again, watching

great theater under the same roof!

When the pandemic forced Cal Performances to close its doors in March 2020, no one could have imagined what lay ahead. Since then, we've witnessed a worldwide health crisis unlike any experienced during our lifetimes, an extended period of political turmoil, recurring incidents of civil unrest and racially motivated violence, and a consciousness-raising human rights movement that has forever—and significantly—changed how each of us views social justice in our time.

Of course, the pandemic remains with us to this date and future challenges—including many adjustments to “normal” procedures and policies—can certainly be expected. I encourage you to check Cal Performances' website regularly for the most current information regarding our COVID-19 response. First and foremost, I assure you that there is nothing more important to us than the health and safety of our audience, artists, and staff. (And I remind one and all that proof of vaccination is mandatory today, as is protective masking throughout the event.)

Our season continues this month with New York's pioneering **Ballet Hispánico** (Nov 6) making its UC Berkeley debut, performing a vibrant 50th-anniversary program by an intergenerational cadre of choreographers who have been part of the company's rich history, and our full calendar offers more of the same, packed with the kind of adventurous and ambitious programming you've come to expect from Cal Performances. In particular, I want to direct your attention to this year's *Illuminations*: “Place and Displacement” programming, through which we'll explore both loss and renewal, disempowerment and hope, while seeking paths forward for reclaiming and celebrating vital cultural connections that can fall victim to political and social upheaval.

Please take the opportunity to explore the complete schedule through our website and season brochure and begin planning your performance calendar; now is the perfect time to guarantee that you have the best seats for all the events you plan to attend.

Throughout history, the performing arts have survived incredible challenges: periods of war, economic collapse, and, yes, terrible disease. And if it will take time for us—collectively and individually—to process the events of the past 18 months, I'm certain that the arts have the power to play a critical role as we come to terms with what we have experienced and move together toward recovery.

I know you join us in looking forward to what lies ahead, to coming together once again to encounter the life-changing experiences that only the live performing arts deliver. We can't wait to share it all with you during the coming year.

Cal Performances is back. Welcome home!

Jeremy Geffen

Executive and Artistic Director, Cal Performances

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