

Catalyst theatre breathes life into classic gothic tale

Frankenstein delves into a dreamy, hazy world in an attempt to discover love

Frankenstein

Directed by Jonathan Christenson
Starring Nick Green, Andrew Kushnir,
Sarah Machin-Gale and Tim Machin
Runs 8-25 March
Catalyst Theatre

MARIA KOTOVYCH
Arts & Entertainment Staff

For most of us, hearing the word “Frankenstein” conjures up images of monsters, destruction and gory violence. While Catalyst Theatre’s presentation of *Frankenstein*—based on the gothic novel by Mary Shelley—strives to tell the same tale as the novel, it also attempts to incorporate humour, dance, music and a unique costume design to create a dream-like world.

According to production designer Bretta Gerecke, *Frankenstein* tells the story of two protagonists, Dr Victor Frankenstein and the Creature. Obsessed with creating life, Dr Frankenstein builds the Creature but is ultimately disappointed when he realizes he couldn’t give life to a perfect being. Upset with his creation, Dr Frankenstein flees and abandons the Creature, leaving it to journey alone through the uninviting world and experience some vicious treatment at the hands of those who encounter him.

Gerecke explains that Mary

Shelley’s story was based on a dream. The production re-creates that atmosphere, giving the entire production a fairy-tale-like feel, and the costumes are just one of the contributing visual elements.

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BRETTA GERECKE

“We’ve used paper and glue—that doesn’t sound very interesting,” Gerecke laughs about her set description. “We’ve used paper and glue and plastic as our primary elements to sculpt, build and sort of create architectural forms that we couldn’t have created out of common building materials. It’s sort of a sculptural event.”

Each costume has a textured, monochromatic, white-to-grey palette. Coloured lights thrown on the costumes shift the play’s mood and time, Gerecke explains, and when combined with lyrical music and dance, the visual imagery captures

the dream-like journey on which Dr Frankenstein embarks.

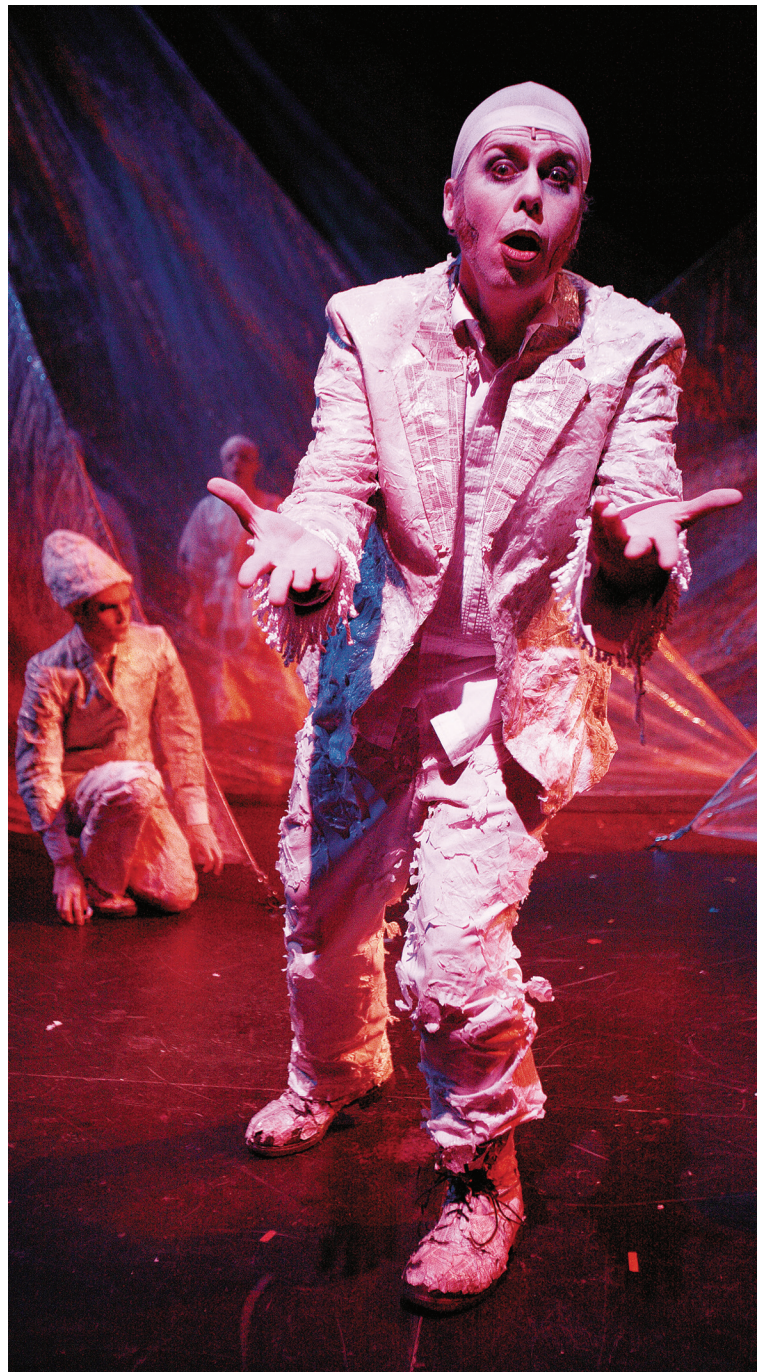
“We try to integrate everything so it feels like an organic whole at the end of the day,” Gerecke says. “It’s a magical story, full of surprise. It has unexpected turns. It’s a very lyrical, poetic show.”

In addition to the trance-like quality of the set design, the play also employs a chorus that adds a touch of humour to the play as it guides the audience through the story.

“[The chorus is made up of] witty, sort of smart-alecky characters that raise an eyebrow and have a hilarious turn-of-phrase, so it doesn’t take itself too seriously,” Gerecke explains. “It’s not a lofty show. It’s a show that maintains the human spirit of fun and a sort of jovial tongue-in-cheekness. It has a very Canadian sense of humour about it.”

After putting it all together, the production finds a new, less gothic way to tell this old tale. The themes of the story, however, are universal to any time and place, Gerecke says.

“In the society we live in today, we’re all sort of driven to create or invent or be the first person to do something in a new way,” Gerecke says. “I think these things are sort of universal: they keep us motivated to be better and strive for more, and that’s the tangled web that the Doctor weaves.”



JACKSON HINTON

PLEASE SIR, CAN I HAVE SOME LOVE? Catalyst Theatre’s production of *Frankenstein* wants us to think about what motivates and drives us in life.



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