

**The first production of A Noise Within's
2019-2020 Season: THEY PLAYED WITH FIRE**

Frankenstein

By Nick Dear

From the novel by Mary Shelley

Directed by Michael Michetti

Aug. 11 – Sept. 8, 2019

(Press Opening Weekend – Aug. 17 & 18)

Pasadena, Calif. (July 17, 2019) – A Noise Within (ANW), California's acclaimed classic repertory theatre company, is proud to announce the **California Premiere** of Nick Dear's *Frankenstein*, **directed by Michael Michetti** and adapted from the original novel by **Mary Shelley**. The first play of ANW's 2019-2020 season, **THEY PLAYED WITH FIRE**, will run as a stand-alone production from **Aug. 11 through Sept. 8, 2019**. An instant international sensation, *Frankenstein* was first captured live in 2011 on London's National Theatre stage in celebration of the novel's 200th anniversary. Distributed to cinemas across the globe, the original production was directed by Academy Award®-winner Danny Boyle and starred Benedict Cumberbatch alternating between the roles of Dr. Victor Frankenstein and the Creature. There will be **press performances** on **Saturday, Aug. 17 at 8 p.m.** and **Sunday, Aug. 18 at 2 p.m.**

This electrifying tale of a creature cast away by his creator into a hostile world—only to wind his way back in a dangerous game of destruction—has captivated audiences for over 200 years. The gothic story comes to life with Nick Dear's adaptation of the chilling fable by Mary Shelley, animating the themes of social rejection, intellectual hubris, and the nascency of good and evil.

Director Michael Michetti said, "By telling the story from the point of view of the Creature, this highly theatrical adaptation of Mary Shelley's beloved novel delivers not only the terror we expect

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from the story, but a surprisingly thoughtful and moving exploration of society's role in teaching and perpetuating violence.”

Frankenstein represents one of the largest and most complex productions that ANW has undertaken to date. To bring the Creature to life, **Director Michael Michetti** worked closely with **Movement Director and Assistant Director Rhonda Kohl** in an extensive week-long rehearsal, titled “**Creature Week**,” focused on the movement of the Creature with actor Michael Manuel, who previously performed as Iago in ANW’s production of *Othello* and will play the Creature in this production.

“The Creature’s physicality is an important element of the production because movement and non-verbal communication are the only way the Creature can express himself through the first part of the play,” explained **Movement Director and Assistant Director Rhonda Kohl**. “We had to ‘unlearn’ what we knew about how developed humans behave, and we discovered how our version of an innocent creature instinctually interacts and kinetically communicates with the world. *Frankenstein* takes beautiful, bold theatrical risks and invites audiences to emotionally connect with the Creature, starting with his birth on stage and re-discovering the world through his eyes.”

“Creature Week” has been made possible with the generous support of the **David Lee Foundation** for ANW’s production. In addition to the week-long movement-centric rehearsal for the Creature, *Frankenstein* will feature spectacular makeup and prosthetics by **Shannon Hutchins** and **Angela Santori** and add enhancements to the production that will create a deeply moving experience for the play’s California premiere. The David Lee Foundation aims to support, enhance and promote Los Angeles area professional theater and to encourage the production of plays and musicals that might otherwise be overlooked because of financial considerations.

To enrich the themes of the play, ANW’s **Noise Now** program will partner with **LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes** to present Latinx print-makers **Daniel González** and **Joel Rendón** for a visual art exhibition titled, “**Tlacantzolli: Monsters and Chimeras**.” Tlacantzolli in Nahuatl means “men

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squeezed together” and alludes to the monsters and chimeras that will activate ANW’s walls. Human beings have always been fascinated by the idea of being able to absorb the energies of other creatures and manifest their attributes through some sort of magical process or meditation. Daniel González’s and Joel Rendón’s hybrids of creatures and humans illustrate the idea of Tlacantzolli while also contemporizing it, pushing viewers to consider how their everyday interactions with the environment and the world transforms them. “Tlacantzolli: Monsters and Chimeras” will be on exhibit through the run of *Frankenstein*, from **Aug. 17 through Sept. 8.**

Daniel González shared: “My life has been shared between two countries, the United States and Mexico. I am aware of the reality that an ethnic and racial border exists between people. We are told we don’t belong here, that we are alien to this country when nothing could be further from the truth. Culture does not honor borders. I feel that it is my responsibility as a print-maker to be a vehicle not only for culture but to also inspire a sensibility of the creative as a formidable weapon for social justice. My work records, through images, stories grandmothers tell of guardian angels by bedsides, of the devil dancing on roof tops, stories of hardships past when things seemed dark and uncertain. Each piece I make is a voice to memory, an artistic artifact recalling old words that fade with time, a celebration of the survival of a culture.”

ANW’s **Words Within reading series** will also tie into the themes of *Frankenstein* by presenting the first reading of the new season, ***Bloody Poetry* by Howard Benton on Monday, Aug. 26 at 7 p.m.** An elegiac and fiery play about poetry and failed utopias, *Bloody Poetry* follows Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, and their lovers Mary Shelley and Claire Clairmont, into exile and stages the famous biographical events of the writers’ lives—the meeting of Shelley and Byron and the stormy night when *Frankenstein* was conceived. The reading is free to attend, but reservations are strongly encouraged.

The **official 2019-2020 national Academic Decathlon literature selection** is Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein*; as a result, local Southern California area competing student teams have a rare opportunity to see a professional production of a faithful stage adaptation of the novel at A Noise Within. Students from Los Angeles and from Pasadena, Victorville, Antelope Valley, Redlands,

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Rialto, Rowland Heights, Oxnard, Torrance, Montebello, Santa Clarita, Bellflower, Glendale, Bakersfield, Hemet, Santa Ana, and Palos Verdes Peninsula are attending the show at both special student performances and regular performances.

The **2019-2020 United States Academic Decathlon (USAD) theme** is “In Sickness and in Health: An Exploration of Illness and Wellness.” Decathlon students must familiarize themselves with the scientific and cultural contexts of *Frankenstein*—including materialism vs. vitalism, monsters, body snatching and grave robbing, reanimation, and resurrection.

Single ticket prices for *Frankenstein* start at \$25 and are available at anoisewithin.org, by phone at 626-356-3121, and at the box office located at 3352 East Foothill Blvd. in Pasadena, Calif.

Frankenstein features scenes of violence and is recommended for audiences ages 10 years and older.

Calendar Listing

Frankenstein

By Nick Dear

From the novel by Mary Shelley

Directed by Michael Michetti

at A Noise Within, 3352 E. Foothill Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91107

The Cast and Creative Team

The cast includes (*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States)

The Creature: Michael Manuel*

Victor Frankenstein: Kasey Mahaffy*

Elizabeth / Female Creature: Erika Soto*

De Lacey / Ensemble: Harrison White*

Felix / Ensemble: Thomas Hobson*

Agatha / Ensemble: Tania Verafield*

M. Frankenstein / Ensemble: Bjørn Johnson*

William Frankenstein / Ensemble: Christian Ganiere

William Frankenstein / Ensemble: Van Brunelle

Gretel / Ensemble: Katie Rodriguez

Gustav / Ewan: Jeremy Rabb*

Klaus / Ensemble: Robert Hope

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Clarice / Ensemble: Desirée Mee Jung*

Rab / Ensemble: Garrett Walters

Directed by **Michael Michetti**. Scenic design by **François-Pierre Couture**[†]; costume design by **Garry Lennon**[†]; lighting design by **Jared A. Sayeg**[†]; original music composition and sound design by **Robert Oriol**; movement director and assistant director is **Rhonda Kohl**; fight choreography by **Kenneth R. Merckx, Jr.**; wig and make-up design by **Shannon Hutchins**; Creature make-up design by **Angela Santori**; props master is **Erin Walley** and additional casting by **Victoria Hoffman**; stage manager is **Julia Zayas-Meléndez*** and assistant stage manager is **Jacob Houser***. [†] Designer is represented by United Scenic Artists Local USA-829 of the IATSE.

Sponsors

Support for this production provided by the **David Lee Foundation**.

Co-Sponsor: **Anni Frandsen Low, Ph.D.**

Performances

Saturday, Aug. 17 at 8 p.m. (Opening Night & Press Performance #1)

Sunday, Aug. 18 at 2 p.m. (Press Performance #2)

Thursday, Aug. 22 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 23 at 8 p.m. (Post-Show Conversation)

Saturday, Aug. 24 at 2 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 24 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 25 at 2 p.m.

Sunday, Aug. 25 at 7 p.m. (Sunday Rush)

Wednesday, Aug. 28 at 7:30 p.m.

Thursday, Aug. 29 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 30 at 8 p.m. (Post-Show Conversation)

Saturday, Aug. 31 at 2 p.m.

Saturday, Aug. 31 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 1 at 2 p.m. (Post-Show Conversation)

Thursday, Sept. 5 at 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 6 at 8 p.m. (Post-Show Conversation)

Saturday, Sept. 7 at 2 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 7 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 8 at 2 p.m.

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Ticket and Price Information

Buy Online: www.anoisewithin.org **Buy Via Phone:** 626-356-3121

Purchase at Box Office: 3352 E. Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107

Regular Prices: Single tickets from \$25, Student Rush with ID an hour before performance \$20.

Groups (10 or more): Adults from \$25 to \$50 a ticket, up to 35% off; Students from \$18/tickets. Call 626-356-3121 for more information and ask for Subscriber Services Manager Deborah Strang.

Sunday Rush: Aug. 25 at 7 p.m. – all tickets remaining are \$25, available online after 12 a.m. day of performance with the code **SUNDAYRUSH** or at the box office, cash or credit, after 2 p.m. day of performance.

Symposium and Post-Show Conversations

This run of *Frankenstein* includes a symposium with Professor of English from Glendale Community College, **Susan Henry**, at 6:45 p.m. on Aug. 14, 2019 and post-show conversations on Aug. 23, Aug. 30, Sept. 1, and Sept. 6, 2019.

ANW's 2019-2020 Season – THEY PLAYED WITH FIRE

“**THEY PLAYED WITH FIRE** indeed! A Noise Within’s 2019-20 season embraces the incandescent power of change,” said ANW Producing Artistic Director **Geoff Elliott**. “Our upcoming titles are peopled with formidable characters – torches in hand – willing to either burn down the house or build a mansion of possibility.”

ANW’s fiery 2019-2020 season will begin with the California Premiere of Nick Dear’s stage adaptation of Mary Shelley’s 200-year-old gothic novel, *Frankenstein* (directed by Michael Michetti; Aug. 11 – Sept. 8, 2019). *Frankenstein* will be followed by the first chronologically in Pulitzer Prize winner August Wilson’s celebrated American Century Cycle, *Gem of the Ocean* (directed by Gregg T. Daniel; Sept. 22 – Nov. 16, 2019), which will run in rotating repertory with

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Sam Shepard's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, *Buried Child* (directed by Julia Rodriguez-Elliott; Oct. 13 – Nov. 23, 2019). The first half of the season will close with family holiday favorite Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (directed by Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott; December 4 – 23, 2019).

The second half of ANW's explosive new season will open with a stirring production of William Shakespeare's emotional romance, *The Winter's Tale* (directed by Geoff Elliott; February 9 – April 11, 2020), and will run in rotating repertory through the spring with Eva Le Gallienne and Florida Friebus' classic adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* (directed by Stephanie Shroyer; March 1 – April 18, 2020). Stephen Sondheim's Tony Award®-winning musical thriller *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (directed by Julia Rodriguez-Elliott; May 10 – June 7, 2020) will fan the flames before closing out ANW's most ambitious season yet.

ANW Producing Artistic Director **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott** said, "Whether they are teetering on the precipice of redemption (*Gem of the Ocean; The Winter's Tale*) or revenge (*Sweeney Todd*), or haunting revelation (*Frankenstein; Buried Child*), or even an outrageous romp down a rabbit hole (*Alice in Wonderland*), they are all staking their lives on a chance to transform the world around them."

"We invite you to join us as we venture with these risk-takers, revolutionaries, and game changers. We will see you at the theatre," said ANW Producing Artistic Directors Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott.

About *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, also known as the *Modern Prometheus*, is considered one of the prominent literary works of the Romantic Movement. A Gothic novel, Shelley's work poses a key question common among many artists during the Industrial Revolution: what happens when the quest for scientific progress becomes a more powerful drive than morality?

To address this fundamental question, Shelley appeals to the sublime—that is, through her writing, she creates a narrative atmosphere full of awe and curiosity as well as horror. Meant to inspire

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wonder as well as fear, the sublime is a fundamental device employed by many Romantic artists and writers to highlight the tension between innovation and destruction that emerged during the industrial enterprises of the 18th and 19th centuries.

In true Romantic fashion, Shelley's work *Frankenstein* is full of high levels of emotion. As Frankenstein's Creature becomes increasingly knowledgeable, we, as the audience, see him become a progressively emotional being. The more he learns about the world, the larger the Creature's capacity for complex emotions becomes. Over the course of the narrative, the Creature begins to feel everything from loneliness to rage, from love to revulsion. These emotions ultimately act as fuel for the Creature's actions.

Subjectivity, a key element of Romanticism, plays an important role in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. There is not a singular narrator in Shelley's original work. Rather, the narration shifts from Robert Walton, the captain of a North Pole-bound ship who finds Victor among the ice caps, to Victor Frankenstein, to Frankenstein's Creature, to Elizabeth Lavenza. The myriad of narrators provides accounts from many perspectives, and therefore limits the idea that there is a singular and objective truth to the narrative's events.

The subject matter of Shelley's work is distinctly Romantic and Gothic in nature. Victor Frankenstein wants to utilize science to manipulate the natural order of the world. Innovation, imagination, and inspiration are at the core of Victor's work to reanimate a corpse. However, once he has successfully reanimated the corpse, Victor becomes instantly frightened of his work, and he flees. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* embodies the fear of scientific progress jeopardizing humanity and morality, which remains relevant 200 years later with the continual advancement of science and technology.

About *Frankenstein* Adaptor and Playwright, Nick Dear

Nick Dear is a British playwright and screenwriter who has garnered great success for his adaptations of classic literature for the stage and the screen. He was born in Portsmouth, England on June 11, 1955. He grew up along the south coast of England in Southampton, and he attended the University of Essex where he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Comparative European Literature in

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1977.

During his time at the University of Essex, Dear was cast as the Second Murderer in a production of *Macbeth*. Because of this experience, Dear quickly realized that he was not going to be an actor. Instead, he became interested in playwriting, and by the time he graduated, he had written his first play.

After leaving the University of Essex, Dear moved to Yorkshire in northern England. There, he worked odd jobs while he wrote a series of plays for BBC Radio, and he began to write scripts for the stage. Dear's professional breakthrough came in 1986 when the Royal Shakespeare Company produced Dear's play, *The Art of Success*, in Stratford-upon-Avon. Since this landmark production, Dear has sustained a full-time career as a playwright and screenwriter.

After the successful run of *The Art of Success*, Dear adapted a number of classic works including Maxim Gorky's *Summerfolk*, Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and Toriso de Molina's *The Last Days of Don Juan*.

Dear's writing was met with great popular success in 1995 when his first film for television, *Persuasion*, based on Jane Austen's novel of the same name won a BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television) award. Because of its critical success, *Persuasion* was screened in cinemas around the world.

In 2003, Dear joined the writing team for the long-running British television series, Agatha Christie's *Poirot*, which chronicled the life of Agatha Christie's fictional character, Detective Hercule Poirot. Dear wrote a number of episodes for the series, including the series' finale.

In 2011, Dear's adaptation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* premiered at the National Theatre in London and was captured live for theatrical release. The sold-out production, directed by Academy Award®-winner Danny Boyle and starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller, became an international success and was experienced by nearly half a million people in cinemas around the globe.

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Dear currently lives in London with his wife, Penny Downie, where he continues to write.

About *Frankenstein* Author, Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley was born on August 30, 1797 as Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, an author and famous defender of women’s rights, died eleven days after Mary was born. Mary grew up with her father, William Godwin, a radical philosopher, and five semi-related siblings.

Shelley had a somewhat unconventional upbringing. While she attended a small, private elementary school as a child, she received her most important education at home. As a philosopher, journalist, and author, William Godwin set high intellectual standards for his children. It was from this intellectually electric environment that Shelley gained the confidence to question social norms. Her education at home was broad—Shelley studied history, mythology, literature, French, and Latin. In 1811, William Godwin described Shelley as “singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind. Her desire of knowledge is great and her perseverance in everything she undertakes, almost invincible.”

In November of 1812, Mary met Percy Bysshe Shelley, a poet and philosopher, when he came to visit the Godwin home. However, it was not until 1814 that Mary and Percy began to grow close. Quickly, they fell in love, and the two, accompanied by Claire Clairmont, Mary’s stepsister, ran off to travel Europe.

By the time Mary and Percy returned to England from their trip in September 1814, Mary was pregnant. Mary’s first daughter was born two months prematurely and died after just twelve days. In January 1816, Mary gave birth to a healthy baby boy she named William, after her father.

Later that year, Mary, Percy, and Claire travelled to Geneva, Switzerland for the summer. There, they stayed with Lord Byron, a famous British poet, and his friends. The summer in Geneva was particularly stormy and proved an excellent backdrop for a ghost story-writing contest. During this contest, Mary struggled with a bout of writer’s block until, one night, she woke from a nightmare. Mary describes a scene from her dream: “I saw a pale student of unhallowed arts

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kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be.” This was the inspiration for her first novel, *Frankenstein*, or the *Modern Prometheus*.

When Percy and Mary returned to England after their summer in Geneva, the two married, and on September 2, 1817, Mary Shelley gave birth to her second daughter, Clara Evernia Shelley, while she and Percy were travelling in Italy. Clara grew ill and died of dysentery shortly after her first birthday.

In 1818, Shelley anonymously published *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*, with a dedication to William Godwin, her father. Initially, critics believed that the novel was written by a man, and many assumed that Percy Bysshe Shelley might be the author. It was not until a later edition of the novel was published that Mary Shelley revealed that she had written the work.

The Shelleys remained in Italy after the publication of *Frankenstein*, and while they were in Rome, their son, William, died of malaria in 1819. The loss of both of their children caused a considerable amount of strain in the Shelleys’ relationship. While in Florence in November 1819, Mary gave birth to her fourth, and only surviving child, Percy Florence Shelley. However, 1822, Mary suffered another great loss when Percy Shelley drowned in a storm while sailing. Although she was devastated, Mary’s dedication to writing did not falter. In fact, she quickly began to edit and publish her late husband’s works in *The Liberal*, a political magazine, and within a year of Percy’s death, she wrote and published a work of her own, *A Tale of Passions*.

In order to raise her son, Mary returned to England in 1823. She continued her work as a writer, publishing her own short stories and poems as well as Percy Shelley’s works in prominent London journals and periodicals. During this period, Mary Shelley wrote *The Last Man*, one of the first ever post-apocalyptic novels, set in the 21st century, which was published in 1826. Over the next two decades, Shelley wrote three more novels, contributed essays to journals, and continued to publish her late husband’s writings.

Throughout the last decade of her life, Mary Shelley began to suffer from intense headaches as

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well as pain and paralysis in her arm. She continued to work through her headaches and pain until 1848 when her health quickly began to deteriorate. Mary Shelley passed away in her London home on February 1, 1851. Her most famous work, *Frankenstein*, celebrated its 200th anniversary last year.

About A Noise Within

A Noise Within has been called “an oasis for those who love classic stories” by *Los Angeles Times* and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, Calif. ANW’s award-winning resident company practices a rotating repertory model at their state-of-the-art, 324-seat performance space. This venue, established in 2011, has allowed ANW to expand its audience, surpassing its previous box office, subscription, and attendance records year after year.

In addition to producing world-class performances of classic theatre, the organization runs robust education programs committed to inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. Helmed by Producing Artistic Directors **Geoff Elliott** and **Julia Rodriguez-Elliott**, who hold MFAs from San Francisco’s renowned American Conservatory Theatre (A.C.T.), A Noise Within truly delivers **CLASSIC THEATRE, MODERN MAGIC**. <http://www.anoisewithin.org>

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