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Frankenstein: The Year Without a Summer - Shelley Theatre, Boscombe

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- [By Darren Slade](#) » Chief Reporter

THIS was thought to be the first public performance in 110 years at the small theatre in the former home of Percy Florence Shelley, whose mother Mary was the author of Frankenstein.

The unrestored auditorium was still lit by candles, making it the perfect gloomy setting for the cast to present two stories. The first was the tale of how young Mary Shelley, staying with her lover Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron in a rain-lashed house by Lake Geneva, took up the challenge to write a scary story and created Frankenstein. The second was the tale of Frankenstein himself – the scientist whose noble efforts to conquer death bring him only misery.

Writer-director Helen Davis deployed music, masks, mime and some almost Python-esque humour to create a compelling production which reminded us just how tragic and disturbing Shelley's original text was. And the cast of three – Gary Trainor, William Kenning and Natalie Farmer – were all powerfully charismatic, their performances easily filling the venue.

If shows as good as this come along every 110 years, the Shelley Theatre will have been worth preserving.

* Remaining performances at [Boscombe](#) are sold out but the production is on tour, including stops at Christchurch's [Regent Centre](#), Shaftesbury, Sherborne and Dorchester. See [dorsetcorset.co.uk](#)