

## FRANKENSTEIN'S CHILDREN opens to enthusiastic audiences REVIEW by Bridget Haylock

### **Frankenstein's Children – Gothic- Comedy-Horror at the Phee**

*Frankenstein's Children*, written by David Carlin, directed by Stephen Mitchell, and produced by the Castlemaine Theatre Company, opened at the Phee Broadway Theatre on Friday 17 May 2019 for a three week run.

This is an ambitious work set in the bodysnatching world of 1832 London, where the Industrial Revolution is wreaking havoc with traditional society. In a time when few women are educated or have professional careers, young Anne Sheridan, played with suitable verve by Adeline Johnston, yearns to be a surgeon and rebels against her mother's wish to see her married. She disguises herself as a man and, calling herself James Selfridge, enters the School of Anatomy. There her ideals are challenged by the gruesome reality that ambitious surgeons Sir Astley-Cooper, menacingly played by Kenneth MacLeod, and his son Bransby, cunningly played by Seamus Curtain Magee, represent. This is a reality where scientific progress only happens at the expense of ethics: surgeons need bodies on which to practice, these bodies come from many sources, graves are robbed, people are murdered, and Polly

Chapman, convincingly played by Clare Shamier, even sells her own body to be experimented on after her (inevitable) death. *Frankenstein's Children* is a complex work; a dramatic, comical, musical, epic horror. The strong ensemble cast deliver some remarkable performances as their characters grapple with the murderous reality; people cross their own moral boundaries to survive. Kate Stones beautifully realises this conflict in her depiction of Mrs Hare, who teams up with her practical son, enthusiastically played by Ralph Shipard, to provide the School with bodies. Supporting cast members Donna Steven, David Watson, and Rebecca Barnett show their versatility as different characters who humourously pop up in the story. And Zenith Flume excels as Penny Dreadful, our gothic musical narrator. The set and many scene changes are effectively created from cardboard boxes and newspapers; the lighting and soundscape are detailed in their design, and work to enhance the experience of this macabre world.



*Clockwise from top left: Zenith Flume, Clare Shamier, David Watson, Rebecca Barnett, Donna Steven, Kate Stones, photo Stephen Mitchell*

As audience member I did not quite know what to expect next from this Brechtian feast: stunning tableau, poignant song, comic turn or grisly realism. If you're a fan of gothic-comedy-horror *Frankenstein's Children* is a show not to be missed.

**Thanks Bridget! All the best for your residency at The Phee Broadway.**

**FRANKENSTEIN'S CHILDREN closes this coming Sunday!**

But never fear, there are still tickets left for Friday 31 May 8pm, Sat 1 June, 8pm, and Sunday June 2 at 2pm. Bring a BLANKET!

Buy your tickets here:

<https://www.castlemainetheatrecompany.com/whats-on/ticket-sales/>

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS**

"What amazing talent and the attention to detail was fabulous"

"Magnificent production"

"Standout performances, super effective set, and entrancing, shocking story, dotted with relieving humour"

"Thanks for a great night's entertainment. Brilliant set, lighting & performances. Fantastic work!"

"I've been thinking about your play all morning. There was so many layers to it and so many surprising and thoughtful details."

"a strong brave show "



*From left: Rebecca Barnett, Donna Steven, Clare Shamier, Adeline Johnston, photo Stephen Mitchell*



*From left: Clare Shamier, Ralph Shipard, Rebecca Barnett, Zenith Flume, Seamus Curtain Magee, Adeline Johnston, Kate Stones, photo Stephen Mitchell*



*Audiences are loving the set, lighting and sound components of Frankenstein's Children! Plus the beautifully choreographed transitions.*

*Here's a little photo homage to our fabulous crew!  
Top left: Director Stephen Mitchell, with Stage Manager Delwyn Hopkins; top right: crew member and make up artist - Sage Butler; above left Del and helping hand Brody Clayton; below and right: Jon Henri Wolfe and Neil Harrison work out the lighting...Thanks to Stephen Mitchell for the lovely shot of Sage, and the great rehearsal shots featured with the review.*



# IT'S PARTY TIME!!!...nearly



*The CTC does not condone underage consumption of alcohol!*



*Ol' Stoney as Zogi the High Priest*

Yes, we have locked in the date, and so should you! We'll be having the biggest CTC bash this side of...well, ever frankly! The date is **SATURDAY 20 JULY**, and the venue will be **Lot19**. The theme will be **SCI-FI BACCANAAL!!** So start getting your costumes ready. We were just going to do an ordinary old Ancient Greek Baccanaal, then we were inspired by Audra's amazing Barbarella-style outfits at Opus Belle on Mostyn Street, and also by the fact that our new Secretary Seamus looks EXACTLY like Prince Vultan

from 80s camp cult classic Flash Gordon (AKA Brian Blessed). Not to mention the fact that Mme President's Dad played Zogi the High Priest in said

film. Cool, right?

There will be fire, there will be wine, there will be cake, there will be an unspeakably groovy local live band (TBC). Stephen Mitchell is threatening to burn his piano (TBC), we will definitely make sure he is wearing his infamous Tool Kilt, I might even try and slip some bagpipes past the Committee, if not The Foundry Band. Definitely worth the very modest cover charge (TBC). More details will be forthcoming shortly....



*New CTC Secretary, Seamus Chrtain Magee.*

## News from the AGM

We had a snug little AGM back in March at The Castlemaine Hospital Auditorium, and we now have a lean, mean Committee! Elaine Matheson returns for another year as Treasurer, and likewise Kate Stones as President. Clare Shamier takes over the position of Vice President and Seamus Curtain Magee is our new Secretary! Thanks to Val Victor Gordon for very ably performing the duties of Guest Chair.

**That's all for now...enjoy Autumn's mists and mellow fruitfulness. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram, [www.castlemainetheatrecompany.com](http://www.castlemainetheatrecompany.com) Support local theatre...see you there!**