

Chicago Puppet Fests presents:

# Manual Cinema's

## *Frankenstein*

US/Chicago

January 27-29, 2023, Studebaker Theater

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### PRODUCTION CREDITS

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A Manual Cinema Production

Adapted from the novel by Mary Shelley

Concept and Direction *Drew Dir*  
Devised by *Drew Dir, Sarah Fornace, and Julia Miller*  
Original Music *Ben Kauffman and Kyle Vegter*  
Storyboards *Drew Dir*  
Music and Sound Design *Ben Kauffman and Kyle Vegter*  
Shadow Puppet Design *Drew Dir with Lizi Breit*  
Projections and Scenic Design *Rasean Davonte Johnson*  
Costume and Wig Design *Mieka van der Ploeg*  
Lighting Design *Claire Chrzan*  
3D Creature Puppet Design *Lizi Breit*  
Prop Design *Lara Musard*  
Stage Manager, Video Mixing  
and Live Sound Effects *Kyle Vegter*  
Lighting Technician *David Goodman-Edberg*

### CAST

#### Puppeteers:

**Sarah Fornace** (Victor Frankenstein, Mary Shelley)  
**Kara Davidson** (The Creature, Elizabeth Frankenstein)  
**Leah Casey** (Percy Shelley, Vocals)  
**Sara Sawicki** (Lord Byron)  
**Myra Su** (Puppeteer)

#### Musicians:

**Peter Ferry** (percussion)  
**Zachary Goode** (clarinets and aux percussion)  
**Lia Kohl** (cello, aux percussion, vocals)  
**Robin Mieksin** (flutes, aux percussion, piano)

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## MANUAL CINEMA COMPANY BIO

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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. Manual Cinema 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 was awarded an Emmy in 2017 for “The Forger,” a video created for The New York Times and named Chicago Artists of the Year in 2018 by the Chicago Tribune. Their shadow puppet animations are featured in the film remake of Candyman, directed by Nia DaCosta and produced by Jordan Peele’s Monkeypaw Productions. Recent productions include Leonardo! A Wonderful Show about a Terrible Monster, based on books by Mo Willems, and a new live version of Manual Cinema’s A Christmas Carol, based on the acclaimed virtual production from 2020.

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## CAST BIOS

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### **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.

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## CAST BIOS (CONT.)

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### **PUPPETEERS (cont.)**

**KARA DAVIDSON** (Creature, Elizabeth) is a performer, playwright, puppeteer, and teaching artist currently pursuing her MFA in Playwriting and Screenwriting at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She has been performing with Manual Cinema since 2015, and previous touring shows with the company include *Ada/Ava*, *Lula del Ray*, *The Electric Stage*, *Pop Up Magazine*, and *End of TV* and she was an additional puppeteer for the 2021 feature film *Candyman*. Kara volunteers as a teaching facilitator with the Chicago-based A.B.L.E. Ensemble, which creates theatre and film projects for, with, and by individuals with Down syndrome and other intellectual and developmental disabilities. As a performer she has worked with Lookingglass Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, The House Theatre of Chicago, The Actors Theatre of Louisville, and Nebraska Repertory Theatre, among others. Her video game credits as a motion capture performer include *Injustice 2* (Supergirl), *Mortal Kombat 11* (Sonya Blade), *Call of Duty* and *Black Ops: Cold War*. She is also the co-founder and director of a monthly virtual workshop called The Lab which aids in developing new works-in-progress by artists working in any artistic discipline ([www.thelab.blog](http://www.thelab.blog)).

**SARAH FORNACE** (Mary Shelley, Victor Frankenstein, MC Co-Artistic Director) is a director, puppeteer, choreographer, and narrative designer based in Chicago. She is a co-Artistic Director of Manual Cinema. Outside of Manual Cinema, Sarah has worked as a performer or choreographer with Redmoon Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre Company, Court Theatre, Steppenwolf Garage, and Blair Thomas and Co. Most recently, Sarah wrote the story mode for the video game *Rivals of Aether*. In 2017, she directed and edited the first episode of the web series, *The Doula is IN*. In 2016, she directed and devised an “animation” production of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* with Rokoko Studios for HamletScen at Kromborg Castle in Elsinore, Denmark.

**SARA SAWICKI** (Lord Byron) tours internationally with Manual Cinema, credits include: FRANKENSTEIN (Lord Byron); LULA DEL RAY (Lula’s Mother); MEMENTOS MORI (Lady); ADA|AVA (Aba). Sara is a Company Member with Sojourn Theatre most recently appearing in their newest touring piece, DON’T GO. Other ongoing and past projects include work with: NetherRealm Studios (cinematic performance capture); Actors Gymnasium (Youth Circus co-director and writer); one step at a time like this in collaboration with Chicago Shakespeare Theater (performer).

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## CAST BIOS (CONT.)

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### **PUPPETEERS (cont.)**

**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. She has been a featured artist at the Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival, Baltimore Crankie Festival, and the National Puppet Slam in Atlanta, GA. Upcoming projects include a NPN/VAN funded music-puppetry collaboration with renown musician/filmmaker, Tatsu Aoki, using miniatures, shadows, and live video. In addition to her independent work, she has worked with Manual Cinema since 2013 as a puppet builder and touring puppeteer. Some of her show credits include: FRANKENSTEIN, LULA DEL RAY and ADA/AVA. For her full portfolio, please visit: [myrasu.com](http://myrasu.com)

### **MUSICIANS**

**PETER FERRY** (Percussion) called “the ingenious percussionist Peter Ferry,” (Chicago Sun-Times) and “an artist of vision” (Democrat and Chronicle), is a young American percussion soloist and artistic collaborator. Following 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.

**ZACHARY GOOD** (Clarinets and aux percussion) is a Chicago-based clarinetist, Baroque recorder player, composer, arranger, improviser, and educator. Zachary is clarinetist of the sextet Eighth Blackbird, a founding Co-Artistic Director of the performance collective Mocreps, one-third of the clarinet/percussion/cello trio ZRL, and one-fifth of Honestly Same. [zacharygood.com](http://zacharygood.com)

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## CAST BIOS (CONT.)

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### **MUSICIANS (cont.)**

**LIA KOHL** (Cello, aux percussion, vocals) is a cellist, composer, and multidisciplinary artist based in Chicago. She creates and performs music and multimedia performance that incorporates sound, video, movement, theater, and sculptural objects. She has presented work and performed at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Walker Art Center, Chicago Symphony Center, and Eckhart Park Pool, and held residencies at Mana Contemporary Chicago, High Concept Labs, dfbrl8r Performance Art Gallery, Mills College and Stanford University.

As an improviser and collaborator, she has participated in cultural exchanges in Mexico, France, Germany, Denmark, China and the UK, and toured on four continents. She has played with Makaya McCraven, Whitney, OHMME, and Circuit des Yeux. An active recording artist, she has arranged and recorded with Steve Gunn, Claire Rousay, and Steve Hauschildt, among others.

Lia tours regularly with Manual Cinema and helps create *60 Songs in 60 Minutes*, a quarterly show with the Neo-Futurists. Recent albums include duos with Macie Stewart (*Astral Spirits*), Zachary Good (*Parlour Tapes+*), ZRL (*American Dreams Records*) and solo releases on Shinkoyo/ Artist Pool and Longform Editions.

**ROBIN MEIKSINS** (Flute) is a freelance contemporary flutist focused on collaboration with living composers. Chicago-based, she uses the Internet and online media to support and create collaboration. In 2017, Robin completed her first year-long collaborative project, *365 Days of Flute*. Each day featured a different work; each video was recorded and posted the same day. In 2018, Robin launched the *52 Weeks of Flute Project* featuring different living composers workshopping a piece that culminated in a performance on YouTube. Robin has premiered over 100 works and has performed at SPLICE Institute, the SEAMUS national conference, and Oh My Ears New Music Festival 2018, she was a guest artist at University of Illinois for their first annual '24-Hour Compose-a-thon.' Robin holds a masters degree from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music where she studied with Kate Lukas and Thomas Robertello. (*Parlour Tapes+*), ZRL (*American Dreams Records*) and solo releases on Shinkoyo/ Artist Pool and Longform Editions.

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## STAFF & CREATIVE TEAM BIOS

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**LIZI BREIT** (Puppet Designer) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Chicago. She has worked with Manual Cinema as a performer, designer, animator and director since 2011.

**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*, *The Pied Piper* (Forks and Hope Ensemble). Claire also works as a production stage manager for various 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 the Resident Dramaturg of Court Theatre and a lecturer in theater and performance studies at the University of Chicago. He 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 Technician) is a Chicago based lighting designer working in the realms of dance, theatrical, and architectural design. He has designed and toured with such companies as Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, Eisenhower Dance Detroit, Visceral Dance Chicago, and Water Street Dance Milwaukee, and lit works set on companies such as Chicago Repertory Ballet, Chicago Tap Theater, Joel Hall Dancers, and Thodos Dance Chicago. Theatrically, he has designed with puppet & object oriented companies such as Rough House and Cabinet of Curiosity as well as with such companies as Adventure Stage, Akvavit Theatre, Factory Theater, The Gift Theater, Organic Theater, Red Tape Theater, The Syndicate, and Trap Door Theatre. Architecturally, he has lit pieces at the art space 6018|North and worked as an assistant/associate designer for projects at various Universal Studios theme parks (in Beijing, Hollywood, Orlando, and Osaka), Disney Shanghai, and several Margaritaville restaurants. [dglxdesign.com](http://dglxdesign.com)

## STAFF & CREATIVE TEAM BIOS (CONT.)

**RASEAN DAVONTE JOHNSON** (Projections & Scenic Design) is delighted to be working with Manual Cinema to which previous projects include *Lula Del Ray* and *Fjords*. A Chicago-based video artist and theatrical designer, he has had the opportunity to work with institutions such as 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. MFA Yale School of Drama. [raseandavontejohnson.com](http://raseandavontejohnson.com).

**BEN KAUFFMAN** (Composer, Sound Designer, MC Co-Artistic Director) is a composer, director, interactive media artist and co-Artistic Director of Manual Cinema. His film and interactive work has been shown at The Jay Pritzker Pavilion (Chicago), The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum (Chicago), and CUNY's Baruch College (NYC). He has lectured and given workshops at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York University and Parsons the New School of Design. His past Composer/ Sound Designer credits with Manual Cinema include *Ada/ Ava*, *The End of TV*, and the New York Times documentary *The Forger*. He holds a Master's degree from New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program (ITP).

**JULIA MILLER** (Deviser, Original Cast, The Creature, Elizabeth, Co-Artistic Director) is a director, puppeteer, and puppet designer. With Manual Cinema she has directed *Mementos Mori* and *The End of TV* as well as created original roles in *Frankenstein* (The Creature/ Elizabeth), *Ada/Ava* (Ada), *Lula del Ray* (Lula's Mother), *The Magic City* (Helen), *Hansel und Gretel* (Hansel) and *Leonardo!* (Sam). In Chicago, she has worked as a performer and puppeteer with Redmoon Theatre and Blair Thomas and Co. She spent several years training in devised theatre, clown and mask with Double Edge Theatre, Carlos García Estevez and at the Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Italy.

**LARA MUSARD** (Prop Designer) Ms. Musard 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 Mr. Dir to design and create the majority of the two and three dimensional pieces seen in the Victor Frankenstein portion of the storytelling. Having propped nearly 60 shows at Court Theatre over a twelve year period, Manual Cinema's *Frankenstein* was 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.

## STAFF & CREATIVE TEAM BIOS (CONT.)

**MIEKA VAN DER PLOEG** (Costume Designer) has designed costumes for many Chicago theaters, including Lookingglass Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, The Hypocrites, About Face, 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. She has received two Jeff Award nominations for *Golden Boy* (Griffin Theater) and *Mr. Burns* (co-designed with Mara Blumenfeld, Theater Wit).

**KYLE VEGTER** (Composer, Sound Designer, MC Co-Artistic Director) is a composer, producer, sound designer, and Managing Artistic Director of Manual Cinema. As a composer of concert music he's been commissioned by such groups as The Chicago Symphony Orchestra's MusicNOW series, The Pacific Northwest Ballet, and TIGUE. His music and sound design for theater and film has been performed 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. He 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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