

**NAXOS**
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Mary Shelley

Frankenstein

Read by **Daniel Philpott** (Frankenstein)

Jonathan Oliver (the Daemon) • **Chris Larkin** (Walton)



NA200312D

1	In search of the North West passage	4:51
2	A stranger comes on board	5:50
3	Frankenstein begins his story	3:25
4	Departure for Ingolstadt	5:04
5	The study of anatomy	4:54
6	The study continues	3:57
7	The daemon lives	4:15
8	Clerval and the daemon appear	5:32
9	Horrifying news	3:06
10	Frankenstein returns home	5:11
11	Justine's trial	5:52
12	Confrontation with the daemon	6:03
13	The daemon begins his story	5:55
14	The process of learning	7:23
15	The daemon reflects	6:57

16	The daemon converses	7:00
17	The daemon transformed	6:19
18	The first murder	4:29
19	The daemon's demand	6:43
20	Geneva–London–Perth	5:05
21	The Orkneys – the labours begin again	4:15
22	Madness and destruction	3:55
23	The murder of Clerval and prison	5:19
24	Release, return to Geneva and marriage	6:24
25	Murder again	5:41
26	Frankenstein's wanderings begin	4:50
27	Chase over the frozen ocean	3:59
28	The ice closes in	4:18
29	The final revenge	4:08
30	The daemon's last words	6:46

Total time: 2:37:48

Mary Shelley

Frankenstein

FRANKENSTEIN or THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

Mary Shelley was the daughter of the radical feminist Mary Wollstencraft and the mistress – later the wife – of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. In 1816, she and her half-sister, Claire Claremont, mistress of both Shelley and Byron, followed Shelley into exile from his native land, where his frank espousal of a philosophy of ‘free love’ and his outspoken atheism had been little relished. They spent the summer with Lord Byron (also on the run from scandal in England) who had taken the Villa Diodati on the shores of Lake Geneva. The company may even have been joined by the shade of Milton who had once occupied the house. But the current of creative genius that had produced the divine spark in Milton had become, in the popular imagination, something demonic in these two arch-romantic poets.

On June 15, as the lightning flickered across the lake, Mary listened to the conversation of Byron, Shelley and Dr Polidori, Byron’s young amanuensis. They were discussing galvanism (the medical use of

electric current) and the possibility of provoking the very spark of life by its means. The subject was of particular interest to Shelley who had experimented with electrical instruments at Oxford. At the same time the company were deeply engrossed in German horror stories, and the following day they each agreed to try their hand at writing a ghost story. The published outcome was Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, adapted from Byron’s effort, which had in turn been inspired by an hysterical fantasy from Shelley – and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.

Inspiration had been slow in coming, but when it did her nightmarish creation broke upon her drowsing consciousness fully-formed. She ‘saw the pale student of unhallowed arts’ turning in horror from ‘his odious handiwork’, the vile assemblage of human remains which he had animated with the breath of life. And in working out this ghastly fantasy into a full narrative her inspiration did not desert her.

She was hardly nineteen. Though she lived another thirty-five years, she never

again approached the visionary grandeur of conception achieved in this, her first literary effort. All her youthful life's experience went into it. Above all, it was about Shelley himself, who is both the idealistic creative spirit and the hounded outcast, both Dr Frankenstein and his monster. In a sense, the popular misconception that gives the name Frankenstein to the monster himself is an appropriate one. Frankenstein's creation haunts him like his own evil genius, his own shadow made flesh. For it is his refusal to take responsibility for the unprepossessing fruit of his actions that turns it into an avenging angel, destroying all the human connections that make life meaningful, as it pursues him to the grave.

Frankenstein is a meditation upon the grounds of evil inspired by the anarchist

philosophy of Mary's Father, William Godwin. It is also a daring development of Milton's vision of the fallen angel in *Paradise Lost* and a critique of the idea of Divine creation itself. But finally, it must be recognised as quite a new thing for its time: it is the first work of science fiction in English. And as science fiction it is about the limitations of goodwill without wisdom. It is a dire warning against technological hubris, against the temptation to assume that benevolent intentions are sufficient to procure beneficent results. Its timely message is that there are matters with which we tamper at our peril. As such, the novel remains the most powerful Promethean fable of modern times.

Notes by Duncan Steen



Daniel Philpott trained at LAMDA and after success in the prestigious Carlton-Hobbs Award for Radio Drama recorded for BBC Radio 4 and other broadcast work. His theatre work includes productions on the London fringe.



A graduate of Manchester University, **Jonathan Oliver** has appeared in theatre throughout the UK in works ranging from *Julius Caesar* (for the English Shakespeare Company) to Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. Widely experienced in television, film and radio, he has, for a decade, also recorded audiobooks for the Royal National Institute for the Blind.



Chris Larkin trained at LAMDA. Among his theatre appearances have been *Taste of Honey* (Theatr Clwyd) and *The Lucky Chance* (Derby Playhouse). Television includes Frank Stubbs Promotes; films include *Grimby Last Stop* and *Angels and Insects*.

The music on this recording taken from the NAXOS catalogue

TCHAIKOVSKY MANFRED SYMPHONY/THE VOYEVODE CSR Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava), Ondrej Lenárd	8.550224
DEBUSSY PRÉLUDE À L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE/NOCTURNES/LA MER BRT Philharmonic Orchestra, Brussels, Alexander Rahbari	8.550262

Cover picture: After Death, Study of a Severed Head,
Charles Emile Champmartin, c.1818/19.

Mary Shelley

Frankenstein

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The gothic tale of *Frankenstein* and his construction of a human being who runs amok has, with the help of numerous films, become one of the most vivid of horror stories.

But Mary Shelley's original novel, written in 1816, dealt more sympathetically with 'the daemon', showing how an initially beneficent creature is hammered into a daemon by the way he is treated.

Her ideas, and her dramatic but poignant story, is brought to life in this sound dramatisation.

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Total time
2:37:48