

Neil Campbell's Frankenstein
BBC Radio Merseyside Performance
Thursday 17th June 2010

Neil Campbell's 'Frankenstein' is a musical project based on Mary Shelley's famous novel, with original music composed by Neil Campbell and scored for The Neil Campbell Collective and Sense of Sound Choir. It can take the form of a stage performance piece, a progressive rock concept album and (now) a radio performance.

Along with the music, extracts from Mary Shelley's novel are narrated in the voice of Victor Frankenstein (actor Gary Mavers), the central character of the novel. The choir also sing extracts from the Shelley text throughout the piece (see italicised print below).

When 'Frankenstein' was premiered at St George's Hall Concert Room in October 2009 special visuals were projected featuring art by George Jones and animation by Valeria Di Matteo. For this radio performance, however, we have decided to perform the piece as a purely musical/audio experience without the visuals.

My aim in composing and realising this piece was to take the 'Frankenstein' story and use it to create a series of contrasting moods to meet the programme of the tale – dramatic, beautiful, intense, despairing, horrific, bleak etc. These form a sequence of musical movements which, though unified through a series of recurring musical themes and ideas, make I hope for a varied and interesting listening experience.

Neil Campbell, June 2010

1. Movement 1: The Storm

Victor Frankenstein recalls a violent and destructive thunderstorm which he experienced as a child:

*'Laws of electricity, natural philosophy
Explanation of a theory new and astonishing to me
Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus
Set down natural history, excited by catastrophe
Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus
Childish reason. Imagination. Contradictory theories.
Laws of electricity, natural philosophy
Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus
Storm that was hanging in the stars ready to envelope me
An omen of my future misery'*

2. Movement 2: Elizabeth

Victor Frankenstein's adopted sister but also, later, his fiancée - the angelic Elizabeth:

'Elizabeth, my more than sister'

3. Movement 3: Victor Frankenstein

The scientist Victor Frankenstein tirelessly at work exploring theories, carrying out experiments, discovering and inventing new technologies in a frenzy of scientific activity and learning:

'I closed not my eyes that night'

4. Movement 4: The Birth of the Creature

Work starts one evening in November to reanimate the creature which Frankenstein has assembled from dead body parts. The creature comes to life!

5. Movement 5: The Dream Vanishes

Victor Frankenstein realises the horror of what he has done and becomes sick with remorse.

6. Movement 6: An Evil Trail of Bitter Revenge

Bitter that it is not loved and aware that it is hideously ugly and alone, the creature embarks on a spree of murderous revenge with horrific consequences for the family and friends of its creator:

*(The Creature:) 'No Eve soothed my sorrows nor shared my thoughts.
I remember Adam's supplication to his creator.
My creator had abandoned me
And in the bitterness of my heart I cursed him.
I may die, but first you my tyrant and my tormentor
Shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery'*

7. Movement 7: The Fate of Elizabeth

When Victor refuses to continue with work creating a bride to provide a mate to appease the creature, it vows to murder Elizabeth on their wedding night. The creature delivers its ultimate revenge, as threatened.

8. Movement 8: The Trek

Victor Frankenstein alone pursues the creature to the icy wastes seeking his revenge, but cannot succeed in tracking it down:

*(The Creature:) 'I shall die and what I now feel be no longer felt.
Soon these burning miseries will be extinct
Farewell, Farewell
My ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds.
My spirit will sleep in peace.
Farewell, Farewell'*

9. Finale: Rainstorm Part 2

Credits:

Gary Mavers – Narration

Sense of Sound Choir:

Perri Alleyne-Hughes – Director/Soprano

Emily Jackson - Soprano

Rachael Pinder - Soprano

Jennifer John - Alto

Sarah Kershaw - Alto

Julian Gill - Tenor

Kevin Grannell - Tenor

Ogo Nzeakor- Tenor

Aaron Matthews- Bass

Jay Norton - Bass

Joe Stathers-Tracey - Bass

The Neil Campbell Collective:

Neil Campbell – Guitar

Anne Taft – Solo Soprano

Vicky Mutch – Cello

Chris Bradshaw – Keyboards

Andy Maslivec – Bass

Mark Brocklesby – Drums

Music Composed and Arranged by Neil Campbell

All Text by Mary Shelley (from the novel
'Frankenstein')

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