



NICK BRANNAM
DIRECTOR | CHOREOGRAPHER

PRODUCTION	<i>Young Frankenstein</i>
COMPANY	EBOS Musical Theatre
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Zany show is a monster hit

EAST Berkshire Operatic Society's latest production is spectacular. It is also possibly the silliest, most ridiculous story conceived for screen and stage.

Young Frankenstein was the brainchild of two of Hollywood's zaniest creative comedy geniuses, Gene Wilder and Mel Brooks. You can almost hear the pair giggling together helplessly as they inject yet more insane nonsense into their monster show. What they created was a comedy musical parody of Universal's horror movies, and in 1974 it became a major hit film. It goes like this.

Inheriting his grandfather's Transylvanian property, Young Dr Frankenstein, Stuart Hayllor, is persuaded to reignite the family's passion for bringing dead bodies to life. Having left behind his fiancée Elizabeth, Laura Thain, he is thrown (quite literally) into the arms and bosom of assistant Inga, Emily Hobbs. Together with hunchback Igor, Adrian McDougall, and housekeeper Frau Blucher, Anna McCormack, they inject life into the seven foot frame of The Monster, James Lole. From there, any resemblance to the original Frankenstein story disappears, as the tale slips down an increasingly ridiculous rabbit hole.

It's a big stage show, and EBOS has risen marvellously to the occasion, holding nothing back. "If you're going to build a castle, build it big," said one audience member on the first night. And that is precisely what the company has done. There is a Transylvanian castle, and it completely fills the stage from floor to ceiling. But it's not just the set which has been pushed to the limits.

Everything about this production is filled with energy, commitment and bags of fun. It's a show that no company takes on lightly, because nothing about Mel Brooks' Young Frankenstein is intended to be subtle. It requires performers to negotiate big Hollywood dance numbers. It sees them belt out songs and yodel others (while perched upside down on a hay cart). If you think it can't, or shouldn't, be done then you'll find it here. Think pantomime, add 1930s

glamour, a sprinkle of Carry On, and some Broadway numbers. Then put the whole thing on steroids. It's marvellous, joyful, hilarious nonsense and the first night audience loved it.

Staging, designed by Duncan Bruce and Nick Brannam, is big, inventive and fun. Marc Hopkins' lighting is playfully unsubtle in all the right ways. Costumes, by Natalie Hayllor are a fabulous mixture of Broadway and Munsters. The musical score, overseen by MD Trevor Defferd, is rich and complex, (and perfectly executed by a professional nine piece band).

Dance numbers choreographed by Nick Brannam, are a twirling, toe-tapping, cane-pushing delight. Tom Horrox's sound effects are appropriately, horribly daft. Direction by Nick Brannam is witty, daring and inventive. And the performances are big, brave, bold and very accomplished. There are voices in this company that could hold their own on a West End stage.

Young Frankenstein is a tour de force that should be seen. If you want to hear a brain squish and a monster sing, go and see this show. And if it's great performances, big numbers and a whole lot of fun you want, go and see this show.

Young Frankenstein can be seen at Bracknell's South Hill Park Arts Centre. Its opening night was Monday, November 1, and it runs until Saturday, November 5. Performances are at 7.45pm each evening, with an additional Saturday matinée at 2.30pm.

Tickets cost from £16 to £21. For tickets and information log on to: www.southhillpark.org.uk or call the box office on: 01344 484123

Emma Merchant