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Press Release **Blood and Ice**

By Liz Lochhead

11-13 and 17-20 January 2018 at 7.30pm
Matinée 20 January at 2.30pm.

What makes a monster? How Frankenstein came into the world

The genre of Gothic horror was born on the stormy shores of Lake Geneva, where Mary Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron competed to write stirring and unnatural tales. *Blood and Ice* weaves the tragic events of Mary's life into the fabric of her creation, Frankenstein, in a play that will scare you, shock you, make you laugh and make you cry.

"We've taken Liz Lochhead's script, which is superb in itself, and we've pushed it one step further" explains the play's director, Sabrina Poole. "Like her novel, Mary Shelley was darkly fascinating and that is exactly what you will see on stage. Every one of the characters in *Blood and Ice* is on the edge of something, be it greatness or failure. A simple change of heart, a bad or a good decision, could have dramatically altered their lives – and indeed the course of history – and you find yourself willing them to do just that. You will want to get up and throttle a character one moment only to embrace them the next".

Extra resonances abound. The novel Frankenstein was first published (anonymously) in January 1818, with more than 70 theatrical, film and literary re-interpretations since. Very many events are planned in the year ahead to celebrate its 200th anniversary. In addition, Sabrina Poole has not only played the role of Percy Shelley but also directed a production about him at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe – where *Blood and Ice* was first staged.

In this production at the Sewell Barn Theatre, the gorgeous performances, the intimacy of the venue, and the rich poetic language all combine to provide a rollercoaster of events and emotions. Our young lead, Mary Shelley, is played by Emma Stephenson with Sam Todd as her eccentric dreamer husband, Percy Shelley. Verity Roat plays Mary's vexatious step-sister Claire Clairmont who constantly pesters the maid Elise, Rebekah Oelrichs, to "make her beautiful" for the darkly smouldering presence of Lord Byron, Phillip Rowe. Dawn Brindle and Greg Lindsay-Smith together play the role of the mysterious Creature that haunts its creator, demanding answers to the questions that plague its existence.

And if the question should come up at your next pub quiz, Frankenstein was the original 'mad scientist' who created humanoid life from chemistry, alchemy and spare body parts, not the name of the monster itself.

Blood and Ice opens at Sewell Barn Theatre, Constitution Hill, Norwich NR3 4BB on Thursday 11 January 2018. Tickets are available online via www.sewellbarn.org, or from St George's Music Shop, 17-19 St Georges Street, Norwich or by phoning 01603 626414. Because of the nature of the themes that are explored by this play, it is not considered suitable for young children.