



# Classic story takes bizarre twist with Mel Brooks zany humor

By Bob Evans



The Jewish Community Center of Kansas City

The creative genius of Mel Brooks established itself first in movies and later adaptations to successful Broadway musicals proving Brooks can compete on several levels and maintain continued success and shockingly funny material as evidenced with the newest production at The J, "Young Frankenstein."

Mary Shelley's gothic story of a scientific experiment gone dreadfully wrong scared the bejesus out of theatergoers in the

1930s when Boris Karloff portrayed the monster whose gangly, scary, ugly appearance caused others to fear him and not see the kindness he sought. He looked like a monster so people treated him like a monster, but with the right addition of Mel Brooks humor, the horror movie comes to life as a light-hearted musical comedy.



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A magnificent job of casting and direction make The J's production of "Young Frankenstein" a delightful romp for the family. It's got a few adult words but not many. The music is fun. The comedy, fierce; the satire sharp and focused, and the onstage talent is outstanding.

Along with the acting comes the beautiful set construction, the set changes, the costumes, the sound, the music direction, the props, the lighting, and the projection. Kudos to all involved in the technical aspects of the play. Leading the entire production, Missy Koonce directed the piece, and with the production team, and the actors, all worked together well to bring the Mel Brooks farce to light at The White Theater in The J.



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Standout performances come from Joell Ramsdell as the mad scientist, Dr. Frederick Frankenstein, the great grandson of Dr. Victor Frankenstein who invented the original monster; Stasha Cast, Frederick's oh-so-not-so-touchy fiancé; and Kipp Simmons as Igor, Frederick's hump-backed assistant. The three work well together and keep the action light, fun, and focused on them in each of their scenes.



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"Young Frankenstein" cast: Frederick, Joell Ramsdell; Elizabeth, Stasha Case; Igor, Kipp Simmons; Inga, Ashton Botts; Frau Blucher, Annette Cook; The Monster, Scott Fagan; Kemp / Victor / Ensemble, Reed Uthe; Ziggy / Ensemble; Miles Worth; Hermit / Ensemble, Andrea Hoble; Ensemble: Matthew Koehler, Katherine Ruprecht, Tony Francisco, Rachel Reese.

The production team includes: Missy Koonce, director; Rachel Williams Chase, keyboard/conductor; Steven Eubank, choreography; Rachel Reese, dance captain, Maddie Lugenbeel, stage manager, Taylor Hudson, assistant stage manager; Jayson Chandley, scenic, lighting, SFX, projection design; Joshua Gleason, technical director/production assistant; Alex Davila, sound design; Julia Ras, costume design; Bill Christie, properties design.



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The orchestra is Rachel Chase, keyboard, conductor; Matt Fischer, keyboard; Drake Deasley, bass; Dustin Mott, drums; Jerry Old, horn; Kaytee Dietrich, reed; Andres Moss, reed; Andrew Moss, trombone; Cynthia Hartwell, trumpet; Dalton Imhoff Brey, trumpet; AJ Bond, violin.

“Young Frankenstein” continues weekends through Nov. 19. Tickets may be purchased by calling the box office or via the [Jewish Community Center website](#).



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