

FRESH WORKS

a theatrically gruesome battle on trampolines to a soundtrack of  
existential dread and an entire swimming pool worth of sweat

# NIHILISTIC OPTIMISM



# ON TRAMPOLINES

by **kasey barratt** with text by **mary shelley**

**26 NOV - 6 DEC | THEATRE WORKS**

📍 theatre works, 14 acland street, st kilda



CREATIVE VICTORIA



# ABOUT THEATRE WORKS

Theatre Works is an artist-first organisation and we exist to support emerging, established, local and national artists as they achieve their vision on stage with as little compromise as possible. We encourage risk-taking and live for new ideas.

## MISSION

Theatre Works fills a vital niche in the Australian cultural landscape as an artistic home and destination for the ambitious, the new and the eminent.

## VISION

To be the Australian epicentre of independent theatre and independent theatre makers by investing in, empowering and supporting artists of all experience, identity, background and aspiration to make ambitious works that reflect, redefine or reimagine contemporary Australia and contemporary Australian theatrical practice.

## VALUES

### ARTIST OVER ART

We believe in creating safe opportunities and environments for artistic and professional development in pursuit of individual artists and companies' own definitions of success.

### EMPOWERING RISK

We believe that the future is defined by those who challenge the status quo. As such we partner with companies and artists that push the boundaries of content, form or scale.

### CREATIVE FREEDOM

We get out of the artists' way.

### SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

We value the longevity of our organisation, partnering artists and their careers, our planet and our art form. We prioritise the mental and fiscal health of our organisation and partnering artists.

### DIVERSITY AND ANTIRACISM

We believe in a theatre and a theatre sector that is a true representation of the diverse world in which we live. We actively seek to create opportunities and pathways for marginalised communities.

## THE TEAM

**DIANNE TOULSON** (she/her) Executive Director / Creative Producer

**ADAM GARDNER** (he/him) Marketing / Graphic Design / Box Office Manager

**JADE HIBBERT** (she/her) Company Producer

**CHRIS PATRICK HANSEN** Marketing and Producing Associate

**RIVER STEVENS** (he/him) Front of House Co-Ordinator

**JOSHUA FERNANDEZ** Venue Operations Assistant

**ANNE HENDERSON** (she/her) Finance Administrator

**Theatre Works respectfully acknowledge First People's sovereignty and recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters and storytelling by Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia.**

**We pay our respects to the many clans and language groups in Victoria, to their elders past and present, and acknowledge the strength and resilience of all Aboriginal peoples.**

**Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.**



# NIHILISTIC OPTIMISM ON TRAMPOLINES

by **kasey barratt** with text by **mary shelley**

## WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY

Kasey Barratt (she/her)

## CO-CHOREOGRAPHER

Elyssa Barratt (she/her)

## SET/COSTUME DESIGN BY

Josh McNeill (he/him)

## LIGHTING DESIGN BY

Tom Vulcan (he/him)

## SOUND DESIGN/COMPOSITION BY

Sofia Jorgovic (she/they)

John Sharp (he/him)

## STAGE MANAGER & SOUND OPERATOR

Azriel Halge (she/her)

## DRAMATURGY BY

Rosa Ablett-Johnstone (she/her)

Belle Hansen (she/her)

## CO-PRODUCER

Anita Mei La Terra (she/her)

## BAND

Jackson Cross (he/him) on GUITAR

Darby Ferguson-Cumming (he/him) on BASS

Nicholas Costa (he/him) on DRUMS

## CAST

Gabrielle Ward (she/her) as MARY

Bek Schilling (they/them) as PERCY

Eleanor Golding (she/her) as BYRON

Sophie Graham Jones (she/her) as CLAIRE

Zoe Wakelin (she/her) as JOHN

Jett Chudleigh (she/her) as CREATURE

Morgan Murphy-Dale (she/her) as SWING







PHOTO BY GENEVIEVE CHALKLEY

# WRITER/DIRECTORS' NOTE

## KASEY BARRATT

*It's 1816, the year without a summer. A volcanic eruption has plunged the world into a miniature climate change. In the middle of famines, epidemics, political unrest, and the world's worst weather, a group of bored 20-somethings are stuck inside with nothing to do. Until someone proposes a challenge. Who can write the most terrifying ghost story? Inspired by her own nightmares, as the story goes, Mary Shelley set about writing Frankenstein.*

To me, this felt like the perfect framework to tell a story about the present day. All the elements were already there; the characters, the relationships, the setting, this strange intersection between boredom, apathy, optimism, nihilism, and a world that seems to be on the brink of falling apart.

From there, I thought 'what if these characters were so bored they started bouncing off the walls?'.

*Literally.*

So, I'll set it in a trampoline park. The inhabitants of the house - Mary Shelley, Percy Shelly, Lord Byron, Claire Clairmont and John Pollidori - will become the disaffected employees of 'Trampoline World'.

As I began developing the script my fascination with Mary Shelly and her novel only grew. How did this 18 year old girl write one of the most famous novels of all time and single handedly invent an entirely new literary genre? And why is it, more than 200 years later, still so difficult for some to believe she even wrote it?

In learning about Mary's life, and from reading some of her other writings, it feels

almost obvious that Frankenstein is her story. Frankenstein is an exploration of her fears and anxieties, grief, loneliness and uncertainty. And if anyone could tell you a thing or two about grief and loneliness it was definitely Mary Shelley. For me, it felt there was so much within the text that was so deeply personal to her, honestly I find it absolutely insane anyone could argue otherwise. Mary in her own words essentially says as much.

*"And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have an affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart. Its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall never see more. But this is for myself; my readers have nothing to do with these associations."*

- Mary Woolsencraft Shelley, London,  
October 15, 1831

Frankenstein is a story that has been told again and again, and it's been referenced in pop culture more times than I can count. I'm not entirely sure what it is exactly about Frankenstein that fascinates us, I'm sure you could read many lengthy essays on the subject. For me, every time I approach this text there is something new to learn from it, a new perspective that I haven't considered before. And I hope with this work I have managed to achieve the same.

After all, isn't that what a good story should do?







# THANK YOUS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The cast and crew behind Nihilistic Optimism on Trampolines would like to thank the following for their support of this production:

The entire team and all the Front of House staff at Theatre Works for all their help and support through this process.

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A huge thank you to everyone who donated to our Australian Cultural Fund, including Nola Barratt, Alex Glenk, Anonymous, Dianne Toulson, Damon Branecki, Ben Hockley, Emily Darling, Pohlyn La Terra, Stefan La Terra, Roger Ong, John La Terra, and Bruno and Tiziana La Terra.

Additionally a huge thank you to every single person who has assisted in any way or volunteered their time across development, rehearsals and bump-in to help bring this production to life.





# KASEY BARRATT

WRITER AND DIRECTOR



Kasey (she/her) is a queer actor/theatre maker with a deep love for text, poetry, music and physical theatre. She is a graduate of Federation University's Bachelor of Performing Arts (2023). As a theatre maker she enjoys making work that is absurd, dark, comedic, grotesque and delusionally optimistic while bordering on nihilism. As part of her training she performed in Exquisite Corpse 3.0 (dir. Kellie Tori) and discovered a passion for writing, devising and theatre-making. In 2024 Kasey was selected to take part in Theatre Works' Early Career Artists Program, learning how to make ambitious and exciting theatre. As part of the program, she performed in VOLITION; The Volition Project (dir. Belle Hansen), a devised physical theatre show exploring the voyeuristic insanity of reality TV. Most recently she played the role of Mars in Frenzy Theatre Company's, Midnight Carousel by Nick Jay, while also taking on the role of Co-Choreographer and Movement Captain.

# JOSH MCNEILL

SET/COSTUME DESIGNER



Josh is a set and costume designer based in Melbourne, Victoria. He studied a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Production Design) at WAAPA, receiving the Graduate Company Award for Set Design upon graduation.

Most recently, Josh was the Associate Set Designer on Othello (directed by Tanya Gerstle, set design by Callum Dale, Forty-Five Downstairs) and completed a secondment on Dark Mofo (Creative Director Chris Twite, Designer Bruce McKinven). In 2025, Josh designed Sets for Are You There (Wild Boer Theatre Company, directed by Rachel Baring, Theatreworks) and set and costumes for The Belly (Curtin, directed by Jeffrey Jay Fowler, Blue Room Theatre).

# ELYSSA BARRATT

CO-CHOREOGRAPHER



Elyssa Barratt (she/her) is an aspiring dancer and choreographer, with a deep love for creating unique choreography driven by emotion and storytelling. She trained at Transit Dance, High School Academy (2022 - 2023), completing her year 11 and 12 studies alongside full time dance. While at Transit she performed in eight professional level shows, focusing on all dance styles particularly her contemporary technique and movement. In 2024 she completed a year of full-time dance training at Jason Colemans' Ministry of Dance, Diploma of Professional Dance (Elite Performance). While training, Elyssa had the opportunity to learn from many industry professionals and train in all styles of dance. She has worked with various choreographers including Sela Vei, while performing as a backup dancer for Tones & I at her Rod Laver Show (2024). She was also selected to be a part of Vei's Human program (2025). During which she explored different ways of creating work, delved into her artistry, and the choreographic process, while creating and collaborating with other artists. She has also worked with Sian Kelly across various corporate gigs as a performer, as well as Lisa Herbert and Bass Fam creatives.

# TOM VULCAN

LIGHTING DESIGNER



Tom is a set and lighting designer working across all genres of live performance. He graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) in 2023 where his work was recognised with the Lionel Gell Foundation scholarship for excellence. Combined set and lighting design credits include 'The Beep Test' (dir. Jackson Peele), 'SLAY' (dir. Stephanie Lee) and 'Bearded' (dir. Nick Waxman). Lighting design credits include 'Dial M for Murder' (dir. Dean Drieberg), 'threadbare' (dir. Manali Datar), 'Boys In The Band' (dir. Alister Smith, JTC), 'Hänsel und Gretel' (dir. Jane Davidson, VCA Opera) and 'Elegies' (dir. Tyran Parke, Clovelly Fox). Set design credits include 'Pippin' (dir. Kirsten Von Bibra, Federation University), 'Cyrano' and 'West Side Story' (dir. Mark Brady, Melbourne Grammar School) and Associate Set Designer to Justin Nardella for 'The Odd Couple' (dir. Mark Kilmurry, John Frost for Crossroads Live). VCA coursework credits include Set and Costume Designer for 'Gesturing Weaving Unfolding' (chor. James Batchelor) and Lighting Designer for 'Heathers the Musical' (dir. Alister Smith). More of his work can be found at [tomvulcan.com](http://tomvulcan.com)



# SOFIA JORGOVIC

SOUND DESIGN/COMPOSITION



Sofia Jorgovic (she/they) is a third-year student studying Science and Music, based in Naarm, Australia. Working mostly as a sound designer/composer, she's worked on shows at Monash Uni Student Theatre (MUST), including Shakespeare in Love, She Kills Monsters, Chrysalis, Macbeth, and The Mutineers, along with All The Things We've Done at Theatre Works, and they've also been a co-lighting designer for MUST's From Scratch in 2025. As a musician and actor, they've performed original songs and short musicals at MUST's Cabaret Festivals and acted in MUST's Phantom of the Auction, From Scratch, and The Lightning Thief Musical.

# AZRIEL HALGE

STAGE MANAGER & SOUND OPERATOR



Azriel is an Actor, Singer, Songwriter. She got her start in local theatre and school performances where her passion for exploring the world through theatre and music grew. Azriel has just completed a Bachelor of Performing Arts at Federation University, performing in many shows including CRUSH: The Musical and The Caucasian Chalk Circle where she was also one of the main songwriters. 2024 also gave Azriel the opportunity to sing in New York in Manhattan Concert Productions Concert; Children of Eden. She just finished Theatrical's Legally Blonde as Sundeep. To enhance her skills as a songwriter, Azriel has begun a Bachelor of Songwriter and Music Production.

# JOHN SHARP

SOUND DESIGN/COMPOSITION



John Sharp is a composer and sound designer who recently graduated with a Bachelor of Music in Interactive Composition at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. He enjoys contributing to the Melbourne theatre scene, composing and co-writing for multiple shows and musicals, such as 'When Henry', which was recently workshopped with the Be You Group, and 'Destination Earth', which premiered at the 2023 Melbourne Fringe Festival. John has also recently joined the Melbourne Theatre Company as a part of their 'Future Creatives Program'.

# ROSA ABLETT-JOHNSTONE

DRAMATURG



Rosa, a Naarm based actor, is a dynamic and captivating performer, with a passion for physical storytelling and realism. She has an Advanced Diploma of Acting from The National Theatre Drama School and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Monash University. She recently appeared in ABC's 'Bay of Fires' season 2 and Screen Australia's 'FLUNK' Season 5. In 2024, Rosa co-devised and performed in 3 Theatre Works Shows. PIPER, a maximalist and explosive piece by Frenzy Theatre Co (Dir. Belle Hansen); Volition Experiment, a post-apocalyptic and high voltage piece, under the direction of Steven Mitchell Wright and finally performed, produced and dramaturged a production of DREDGE, a raw, visceral and full-bodied physical theatre experience, directed by Brandon Armstrong. In 2023, Rosa's credits include: PLUNDER, with the Anchor Theatre Company, Ohio! and The Charade with Fivebyfive Theatre, and Mysteries, with The Liminal Space.



# BELLE HANSEN

DRAMATURG



Belle is a performer, theatre maker and director who has devised and performed new work with companies across Australia. She is a graduate of VCA with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Theatre) and the co-founder and artistic director of Frenzy Theatre Co. She has performed at many notable programs including at Malthouse Theatre, Rising Festival, La Mama Courthouse, Platform Arts, Capital Theatre, Martyn Myer Arena and has had her work seen Internationally.

# JACKSON CROSS

BAND - GUITAR



Jackson is an excitable, passionate performer that has always loved sharing stories. He started playing in bands at 12 and carried his love for music through when he commenced his theatre journey studying at Federation University with the graduating company of 2022. Since graduating Jackson has found a passion in being a part of new works, participating in workshops and developmental projects, demonstrated performances in three new aussie developmental musical's, 'The White Rose' by Oliver Thomson and Isabella Dymalovski, 'A Wake to Remember' by Samantha Wong, 'Fresno' by Jeremy Harland and Josh Connell and Greenroom Award Winning 'Blue to the Horizon' by Sarah Wynn. Jackson has spent last two summers performing in the park with Melbourne Shakespeare Company, playing Lorenzo in 'The Merchant of Venice,' and Borachio in 'Much Ado About Nothing,' as well as supporting the show with music. Jackson is excited to continue his streak of new works in this wonderful show.

# ANITA MEI LA TERRA

CO-PRODUCER



Anita (she/her) is a queer, BIPOC performer and creative raised and based in Naarm/Melbourne. After finishing her professional training at Arts Academy, Federation University, she made her professional debut in Jude Perl's 'Share House: The Musical', originating the role of Alice at the Arts Centre Melbourne. Anita is passionate about the development of new Australian musical theatre, and has performed in other brand-new Australian musicals, such as 'A Wake to Remember' by Samantha Wong in 2024-2025, and 'Checked Out: The Musical' by Joshua Connell and Stephanie Lee in 2025. Anita is excited to assist the team of 'Nihilistic Optimism on Trampolines' in this season at Theatre Works!

# DARBY FERGUSON-CUMMING

BAND - BASS



Darby F.C (he/him) is a musician and songwriter originally hailing from Djilang/Geelong. Playing music since the age of 10, he shifted between many disciplines and instruments in his formative years before settling on the bass guitar as his primary instrument. He undertook professional training at JMC Academy, graduating with a Diploma of Music Performance specialising in bass guitar in October 2023. He is the co-founder and co-lead of the local alternative indie trio Garden Lane, contributing collaborative and solo songwriting efforts to that project and gigging in and around Geelong and Melbourne.



# NICHOLAS COSTA

BAND - DRUMS



Nicholas made his professional musical theatre debut at the age of nineteen in 2024 and has since performed for many productions including Avenue Q (AG Theatre) The Boy From Oz (Theatrical), Young Frankenstein (Lightbox), Seussical (OCPAC), The Beep Test (Theatreworks), and many others. With a background spanning pop, rock, jazz, funk, metal, Latin, and more, he is also an experienced studio musician, having recorded for artists such as Graeham Goble (Little River Band) and performing with artists such as Gypsy Lee (daughter of Kate Cebrano). As a member of a wide array of bands, Nicholas has also performed with artists such as G Flip, Bliss n Eso, The Chats, Confidence Man, Frenzal Rhomb, Bodyjar, The Southern River Band, and many more. He is currently studying for a Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Arts at Monash University, specialising in drums, and is thrilled to be a member of the band for Nihilistic Optimism on Trampolines.

# BEK SCHILLING

CAST - PERCY



Bek Schilling (they/them) is a Naarm based queer multidisciplinary artist. Their passion for new Australian theatre was fostered while completing a Bachelor of Music Theatre at the Arts Academy, Federation University. Their new musical credits include VOYAGERS and YOU'RE A CATCH, WHY ARE YOU SINGLE? and recently they appeared in the Australian premiere of BEARDED at the Frankston Arts Centre & the subsequent sold out season at Theatre Works, originating the leading role of Bet Rawler. In 2024 they starred as Bronwyn in The Roof is Caving in for the VCE Playlist with Frenzy Theatre Co. Bek is frequently seen on stage at Chapel Off Chapel as a part of HOMEGROWN, showcasing new Australian musicals. Bek was a Broadway Unplugged Backing Vocalist in 2020. Bek is represented by Triple Talent Management.

# GABRIELLE WARD

CAST - MARY



Gabrielle Ward is a Melbourne-based actor and VCA Music Theatre graduate. Performance credits include Fairytalors (Meat Market, 2025), puppeteering in Gabby's Dollhouse Live (TEG Life Like Touring, 2025) and Paw Patrol Live! (TEG Life Like Touring, 2024), Castro's Children (Music Theatre Melbourne, 2023), The Humans as Bridget (Antipodes Theatre, 2023), Stranger Sings! as Will Buyers (Salty Theatre, 2022), The Hello Girls as Dance Captain (VCA, 2021), Sweet Charity as Nickie (VCA, 2021), and Mary Poppins as Jane Banks (Walt Disney Productions, 2011). She will next appear in Mamma Mia! (AEG Theatre, 2026) as Rosie Cover / Ensemble.

As a director, Gabrielle's credits include Truscum (The Motley Bauhaus, 2025), Have a Goodnight Walter (No Friend of Mine / The Butterfly Club, 2025), (t)issue (La Mama / Melbourne Fringe, 2024), The Human Centipede Parody Musical (Synergy Productions, 2023), and Murder is an Art (The Butterfly Club, 2022). She has also assisted on Ripening (Citizen Theatre, 2025), Morning Melodies (VCA, 2023), and Ego Machine (Citizen Theatre, 2022).

# ELEANOR GOLDING

CAST - BYRON



Eleanor Golding is an actor, theatre-maker and graduate of the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA). In 2024, she wrote and directed 'A Figure In The Yellow Wallpaper', playing at the Explosives Factory. She also performed in this work, as well as in 'The Volition Project' (Theatre Works ECAP Program, dir. Belle Hansen) at the same venue. Further stage credits include Nicholson in 'The Wilde Kind' (dir. Sabina Donato), Child in 'Piper' (dir. Belle Hansen), Elinor Ferrars in 'Austen in Therapy' (dir. Kate Ball) and Mas in 'Between The Fractures' (Melbourne run, dir. Jaye Syson). Film credits include Alex in 'Incarnation' (dir. Bernard Winter), playing at MIFF, the St Kilda Film Festival and in contention for the 2023 AACTA Awards. Her voice-acting/presenting credits include the voice of the Green Room Awards for 2024, and Henrietta in 'Persuasion' (Ballarat National Theatre dir. Liana Emmerson) - the production being nominated for two 2025 Webby Awards.



# SOPHIE GRAHAM JONES

CAST - CLAIRE



Sophie is a performer originally from Tasmania. Sophie has studied and worked with the Tasmanian Conservatorium of Music, National Institute of Performing Arts and Opera Australia before studying a Bachelor of Performing Arts at Federation University in 2021. At the Arts Academy, she has been fortunate to perform in productions that include *The Glove Thief*, *Momo*, *Exquisite Corpse 3.0*, *sevENDS Calling* and *MOROT-MOUTH LOVES SUCKFACE*, *An Apocalyptic Musical*. Recently, Sophie choreographed *Fresno the Musical* by Josh Connell and Jeremy Harland at Chapel off Chapel and currently studies with Daniel Cosgrove at DCO Acting Studio.

# JETT CHUDLEIGH

CAST - CREATURE



Jett Chudleigh (she/her) is an actor and theatre-maker living and working on Wurundjeri Country in Melbourne. A love for movement and physicality and a keen interest in the nuance of human connection are at the heart of Jett's work. Her identity as a queer woman and her rich movement history influence her performances and devised pieces across a range of styles, including traditional plays, devised work, film, dance, and immersive theatre. She is a SAFDi and BADC certified Actor-Combatant, and has an extensive training history of stage and screen combat under Lyndall Grant.

# ZOE WAKELIN

CAST - JOHN



Zoe Wakelin is an emerging Melbourne based artist and performer, recently finishing two years training in Musical Theatre at Showfit in 2023. She has been developing her singing and performance skills from the age of 4, starting out with the Australian Girls Choir, and has also practiced Ballroom dancing from a young age, in the styles of Modern, Latin, and New Vogue.

Her performance roles have included Young Eponine/ Ensemble in the 2014 Melbourne season of Cameron Mackintosh's *Les Miserables*, and more recently, Jan in Mucky Puppy Theatre's *D.N.A.*, and Neptune in Frenzy Theatre Co's 2024 production of *Midnight Carousel* at Theatreworks. When she can find the time, Zoe loves creating with other mediums for artistic expression such as painting, writing, or drawing.

# MORGAN MURPHY-DALE

CAST - SWING



Born in Queensland and raised in Melbourne, Morgan Murphy-Dale is a performer with a lifelong passion for the arts. She completed a Certificate III in Acting (Screen) before training at Federation University's Arts Academy. Her credits there include *The Glove Thief* (Mary 2/Cecily) and *Warp and Woof* (Theo), both directed by Kim Durban, and the world premiere of *Momo* (Professor Hora), directed by Ross Hall. She also collaborated with Scott Middleton on the ensemble-devised *Exquisite Corpse 3.0*.

Morgan is drawn to roles that explore vulnerability and the intricacies of human connection; whether in classical works, new writing, or devised performance. She is passionate about the development of new Australian work and has had the privilege of lending her voice to table reads for works such as *Disco* by Ben Hockley, and *Hero* by Desmond Flannery.



THEATRE WORKS

# 2026

## SEASON LAUNCH



# SUNDAY 7 DECEMBER

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image by steven mitchell wright

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