



This excerpt from the full length play DR STEIN is for preview purposes only. It must not be copied, printed or distributed. For a copy of the full script and enquiries about permissions, please contact us at drama@imaginise.net Click [here](#) to be taken to the main website for details.

Doctor Steen

A Scots Play in 3 Acts

In the classic novel *Frankenstein*, we last see the Creature receding across the Arctic ice, presumed lost, as the Doctor appears to expire. However, a little known fact is that the Doctor actually recovered and made his way to Edinburgh, drawn by the reputation for medical excellence and a ready supply of spare parts, courtesy Messrs Burke and Hare. Unfortunately Mary Shelley forgot to write this sequel so, almost 200 years on, we have duly obliged.

Now, ensconced in Mistress Meg's George Square boarding house on the south side of 1820s Edinburgh, the Doctor is ready to try again. What experiments is Mistress Meg's secretive new lodger carrying out in her Edinburgh lodging house? Who is the mysterious Mr Frankie?

All set in a vaguely historical time-frame, with an assemblage of stock characters and preposterous coincidences, a faint resemblance to a classic text, and an unexpected denouement. An affectionate homage to the classic Scots plays of the mid-20th century, but somewhere in there is a 21st-century message of tolerance and acceptance of special people who are not quite the same as everyone else.

Characters:

Mistress Meg Ramsay, widow

Mirren Ramsay, daughter of Landlady, headstrong, bossy

Jamie Ramsay, son of Landlady, romantic but wimpish

Guidwife Allie Lamont, Mistress Ramsay's servant and friend

Jock Lamont, Allie's husband, a loyal old retainer

Sir Oliver Oliver, a lodger in House, with Jacobite leanings

Dr Victor Steen, the new tenant; not a traditional mad scientist but dangerously sane

Elsbeth Forrest, fiancée of Dr Steen

Harri(et) McLeavy, "boy" assistant, willing to learn

Frankie Steen Dr Steen's creation

Various Townspeople

The play is set in a large outbuilding which has served at various times as an artist's studio, a store and workroom. Through a window at stage right can be seen the garden and rear elevation of the main house, a vernacular Georgian building in the South Side of Edinburgh. The back of the room forms a large alcove with a stone stair rising up to an entrance from the mews lane at the rear. The room has been disused for some time when Dr Steen arrives and takes the space for his laboratory. He gradually constructs some strange scientific machinery which is central to an as-yet un-named experiment taking

place behind a screen across the alcove.

At this point in the story, relationships are already tangled – Stein’s “boy” assistant McLeavy has fallen for him, but dare not reveal her secret; Dr Stein’s fiancée is in love with Meg’s son Jamie; and her daughter Mirren can’t find anyone ...

Stein and McLeavy are trying to fire up their machinery but the state of electrical generation and batteries at that time is insufficient for their requirements. A chance remark by one of the other tenants puts them onto the idea of using an impending lightning storm to meet their needs.

They make a kite from a pair of outsize bloomers from the garden washing line, attach it to a long wire, and throw the kite out of the window. It disappears upwards out of sight.

They then run the wires from the kite to behind the screen, and connect them up. They lift the screen away to reveal the shape of a body, under a sheet and lying on the slab, surrounded by a large array of primitive electrical apparatus – glass tubes, coils, wires etc.

They are interrupted by ALLIE and JOCK, the old servants. STEIN and MCLEAVY hastily stand in front of the slab, trying to conceal it.

ALLIE: Hello maisters, I’ve come tae say the ladies are ettlin’ tae gae oot tae the dancin’.

STEIN: Ach, Mistress Allie, I regret that we cannot attend. We have important work to do.

MCLEAVY: Angersome, but yon’s the wey o it.

STEIN: I was going to suggest, why you and Jock not to take the evening off also? We shall manage fine ourselves.

ALLIE: Well, I did say I’d call in on ma sister some time, I suppose this is as guid as any.

STEIN: Excellent. And Jock? Will he go with you?

JOCK: Nae sir. Ah has kidney trouble.

STEIN: Oh? What sort of kidney trouble?

ALLIE: He kidney stand ma sister. No unless he has tae, like at Hogmanay, and then only when he’s fu’. Mair likely tae gang tae doon the tavern.

STEIN: In that case, perhaps he’d accept a drink on me?

He produces a handful of coins

ALLIE: That’s mighty kind o’ you, sir, though he doesna need that muckle siller. No if he’s gaein’ tae come hame and face me, anyways.

JOCK: See, it’s a life threatenin’ condeetion.

STEIN: Really?

JOCK: Aye, if Ah come back stocious she threatens tae kill me.

STEIN: Ach so. Well, why not get a treat for you and your sister? A nice cake, perhaps ...

ALLIE: That’s a guid idea, Doctor. I’ll get a bottle o double-strength gin. Weel, guidnicht, sirs.

They leave. STEIN and MCLEAVY breathe a sigh of relief. MCLEAVY leans out the window, and plays out the string of the kite until it is taut. He ties it up and closes the window.

They wait in anticipation.

There is a flash from outside the window; a crack of thunder, and then a rainstorm bursts

STEIN: Wunderbar!

MCLEAVY: Look at the size o’ the lightning bolts, Doctor.

STEIN: They are moving fast.

MCLEAVY: Be here any minute.

STEIN: A quick doppel-check. Is everything connected?

They quickly re-check their wires and apparatus.

MCLEAVY: All correck and joined up.

STEIN (*becoming excited*): This is the moment I have dreamed of, McLeavy. To infuse the spark of being into a lifeless mass, to see its eyes open, its limbs convulse, to see it draw breath ...

MCLEAVY: Patience, Maister. Soon. Generatin' electricity, whatever the weather!

There is another flash. MCLEAVY counts

MCLEAVY: Yin ... twae ... (*the thunder crashes*) Awfy near, noo.

STEIN: Stand by, mein knaben, and see life itself in the making!

MCLEAVY takes a large pair of curled wires with clips on the end. They lead from the electrical apparatus. He stands round the other side of the table and holds the clips out before him.

There is another flash – this time the crash of thunder is almost instantaneous.

MCLEAVY: Maister, the storm is at its height!

STEIN: Now! Now!

A simultaneous flash and thunderclap – the apparatus begins to hum and glow. MCLEAVY sticks two clips under the sheet onto the body, and stands back.

The lights go down on most of the rest of the stage to emphasise that the apparatus is now glowing and humming more fiercely; it begins to flash, smoke rises. A pulsating eerie glow lights the sheeted body.

MCLEAVY: Maister, look!

The BODY under the sheet shudders, twitches.

STEIN: It's alive! It's alive!

The BODY sits up, the sheet falls off, revealing FRANKIE, Dr Stein's creation. He roars and bangs his chest as the curtain falls.

INTERVAL

Act II

The Studio, daytime. A blackboard has been erected on an easel, and MCLEAVY is standing in front pointing. FRANKIE sits attentively, like an overgrown schoolboy, watching

MCLEAVY: Richt, Frankie, carry on. Whit did we learn the morn? I see?

FRANKIE: Ah see, youse see, we all see ...

MCLEAVY: Guid. And when ye've done daein it?

FRANKIE: Er, I seed?

MCLEAVY: Na. A seed is whit grows intae a plant or a tree. The richt yin is, I saw.

FRANKIE: A saw? Is that whit you cut the tree doon wi'?

MCLEAVY: Which tree?

FRANKIE: The yin that growed from the seed you sawed?

MCLEAVY: We're no quite singin frae the same hymn-sheet, are we? Let's try anither yin. Sew, sewing, sewed, aye?

FRANKIE: Aye.

MCLEAVY: So whit about go?

FRANKIE: Go, going, goed?

MCLEAVY: No, it isnae goed, it's went.

FRANKIE: Where's it went?

MCLEAVY: Na, naethin's went, it jist hasnae goed.

FRANKIE: Well, Ah wish tae goad it hadna went.

MCLEAVY: Mebbe we'll leave that on the table fer a mo. Er, etiquette. Whit d'ye say when ye meet someyin?

FRANKIE (*very deliberately and exaggeratedly*): How do you do? (*he bows low*)

MCLEAVY: Very well, thank you. And hoo are ye?

FRANKIE: Fine, thank you. Ach, but it's nae use.

MCLEAVY: Why no?

FRANKIE: 'Cause Ah never meet nae-yin. You an' the Doctor ne'er let me. Youse always hides me awa'.

MCLEAVY: It's fer the best.

FRANKIE: No for me. Ah'm lonely.

MCLEAVY: Ye'll meet folk when ye're ready.

FRANKIE: But Ah *am* ready. Ah ken my mainners. How do you do? Frankie wants a freend.

He tries to pick up the mirror – MCLEAVY takes it off him quickly

MCLEAVY: Na. Bad boy. Mirrors arenae allowed.

FRANKIE: Why no?

MCLEAVY: Because Doctor said.

FRANKIE: Said? or Seed? Or wus he sawin?

There is the sound of footsteps in the hall.

MIRREN (*offstage*): Coo-ee!

MCLEAVY: Quick! Ahint the screen!

FRANKIE: Why must Ah always hide?

MCLEAVY: 'Cause ye're no supposed tae be here. C'mon!

FRANKIE goes behind the screen. MIRREN enters

MIRREN: Hello. I'm no interrupting?

MCLEAVY: Er, na, na.

MIRREN: I need someone to talk with. It's difficult, but I felt you'd ken what tae do, seeing you're close to the doctor. It's aboot Elspeth.

MCLEAVY: Oh?

MIRREN: She's been pining away, ever since Jamie left. Although she's betrothed to Doctor Stein, she's really in love with Jamie.

MCLEAVY: Is she? Honest?

MIRREN: From the first moment they met. Hadnae you noticed?

MCLEAVY (*brightening*): Na. I cannae say I had.

MIRREN: But Stein neglects her for his science. You could have a word wi' him?

MCLEAVY: Aye, I suppose ...

MCLEAVY sniffs, then breaks down in tears

MCLEAVY: It's all such a mess. Victor – Dr Stein – thinks he loves Elspeth, but her real love's someyin else, but Stein doesnae ken...

MIRREN: Ken what?

MCLEAVY: Who it is really loves him.

MIRREN: Who? (*McLeavy is silent*) What! You!

MCLEAVY: Aye.

MIRREN: Have you tellt him?

MCLEAVY: Hoo can I? He thinks I'm Harry, his assistant laddie. An' he's still set on Elspeth.

MIRREN: I'm no so sure. I think he just taks her for granted. Oh, I dinna mean there's no affection atween them – brought up thegether and aa that – but it's mair like brother and sister, that's all.

MCLEAVY: Do ye think sae? Then mebbe ... Ach Jings, I dae ken.

MIRREN: Aye, life's no a bowl o' ploums. Even if it was, I aye get the stanes. (*wistfully*) Least you've someone tae love, even if they're outwith your reach for now.

MCLEAVY: I'm sorry. Ye've still no ... ?

MIRREN: Found anyone yet? Na, no even someone unattainable. It's yin thing protectin' your virtue, but there's no much point when no-yin's even showin' any interest.

MCLEAVY: Poor Mirren.

MIRREN: As mother keeps telling me, I'm no getting any younger. I'll just settle for being an auld spinster body, me an' ma pussy cat sittin' by the fire.

MCLEAVY: Someyin will come along.

MIRREN: The last half-decent mannie I fancied was Gentleman Jim, and they've went and hanged him.

MCLEAVY clasps MIRREN'S hands

MCLEAVY: Let's go have a wee bit blether ower a nice cup o tea?

They leave. FRANKIE waits until they have gone, then emerges from the screen.

FRANKIE (*in a soapy voice*): Mirren! Sic sweet music in that name. Frankie likes Mirren. Why am Ah no let tae meet folk?

FRANKIE finds the mirror, then freezes as ALLIE comes in, armed with an array of assorted dusters, cleaning sticks etc. She doesn't notice him, but bustles round humming to herself, dusting everything in sight. He stands stock-still, holding the mirror up in statue-esque pose. She even dusts him as she passes, oblivious, and stops to straighten her hair in the mirror he is holding. As soon as she turns round he feels a sneeze coming on; he has to hold it until she exits, still humming to herself.

She leaves; he lets out a big sneeze.

FRANKIE: Whoo! Near yin there, Frankie boy. That wid hae pit the ball on the slates. (*picks up the mirror again*) Doctor say, Frankie no tae play wi' mirror. Frankie's bum be oot the windae. But why no? Ah'm a big boy noo. Doctor's no here, anyways.

He plays with light, reflecting it off walls and ceiling. He is amused.

FRANKIE: Frankie can make the sun come up, look!

Then he catches sight of himself in the mirror

FRANKIE: Ecch! Whit an ugly picture.

He sticks his tongue out at the image. When it does the same back at him, he recoils in horror.

FRANKIE: Aagh! It's alive.

He looks again. He brings up his hand and touches his face with a finger. He stares, open-mouthed, then does it gingerly again. Realisation dawns.

FRANKIE: It's me! Frankie. Oh! Ugly!

He starts to sob.

FRANKIE: No a man, but a monster.

SIR OLIVER comes in, is startled to see Frankie.

FRANKIE: Sir Oliver! (*remembering himself; very formally*) How do you do?

SIR OLIVER: I'm sorry, sir, but you have the advantage of me. Who are you?

FRANKIE: A pal o the Doctor. Ah'm cried Frankie.

SIR OLIVER: A friend of the doctor's, eh? That's all right then. (*looks at him*) You've been in the wars, my friend.

FRANKIE (*looks down at himself, sadly*): A monster.

SIR OLIVER: Merely distinctive, sir. The only monsters are those we create inside our heads.

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First Performed at the Edinburgh International Festival Fringe by Leitheatre, August 2007

Press Comments / Reviews:

"delicious comedy ... bristling with couthy one-liners ... a big load of fun ... packed with brilliantly appalling puns" *Edinburgh Evening News*

"has been lavished with obvious love and affection" *The Scotsman*

"grand entertainment from a company who know how to play to their strengths" *one4review*

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