

British Theatre Guide

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Cloning Mary Shelley

Written by Edie Campbell and Jack Lynch: performed by Edie Campbell
Lynchpin Productions at the Bloomsbury Theatre
(2003)

Having seen Edie Campbell's *Emily Dickinson & I* at the Royal Society of Literature a couple of years ago, I was well prepared for the high standard of acting and writing in this new one-woman show. Campbell has an individual style in the way she combines details about her subject with her own life, drawing out points of similarity and difference.

If anything, Mary Shelley is an even more demanding subject than Dickinson, because so much more is known about her, making selection difficult. Campbell and Lynch give us a combination of biography, literature, science, religion, mythology, philosophy and psychology, ranging widely around the well-documented details of Shelley's life and work.

Visually, the audience's curiosity is aroused before the show begins: the stage is set with what looks like an operating table; four naked dolls sit on the floor in front of it, along with a scattering of books and papers. As the story unfolds, Campbell tiptoes around the various items, gradually revealing their relevance.

The mood of the piece is, on the whole, low-key and measured, counterbalanced at the centre by a parodic modern-day lecture on cloning, delivered in an excellent German accent, with plenty of Mr Potato Head figures for purposes of illustration. This was visually very stimulating, and I enjoyed the humour. But in addition to these two moods, or modes, I felt the need for a third element - having just (by pure coincidence) been studying Constance's speech on the death of her son in *King John*, I wonder if there needs to be some more heightened emotion, bearing in mind the grief Mary Shelley must have experienced at the loss of her young husband and three of her four children?

I'm pleased to see that both Dickinson and *Shelley* will be appearing at this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and wish Lynchpin all the best for their pioneering work.

Reviewer: [Gill Stoker](#)